

JAVA REVISITED

Also by
JOHAN FABRICIUS

SON OF MARIETTA
A MALAYAN TRAGEDY
NIGHT OVER JAVA
HOTEL VESUVIUS
CASTLE IN CARINTHIA
THE LIONS STARVE AT NAPLES
NO RETURN FROM BALI
VAIN LOVE
FLIP WONDERS WHY

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JOHAN FABRICIUS



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PREFACE

SINCE I left the Indies in the early spring of 1946, happenings in Java have gone from bad to worse. While great parts of Indonesia are of their own free will co-operating with the Dutch and gradually recovering economically, material conditions in Java have led to general despair among the people until they reached the stage of dumb apathy. Arson and murder went on undisturbed within the Republican territory whose leaders proved utterly powerless against extremists and criminals.

At Linggadjati an agreement was signed between the Dutch and the Indonesians, and from the first day this agreement was cynically and constantly violated by the *pemoedas* (the Republican Youth Army) whose military commanders flouted Soekarno's and Sjahrir's armistice orders and openly encouraged their fanatical followers to use "headhunter tactics" (the word was actually used by General Soetomo) against the Dutch and their Indonesian friends.

When a long series of protests echoed with a hollow sound against the empty depths of a noisy and chaotic interior, the Dutch at last and after much hesitation decided upon police action. It hardly cost any blood—much less than the period of "peace" which preceded it—and brought relief to millions who crowded along the roads and cheered the rapidly advancing troops. Yet the leftish press all over the world chose to name it a cruel war against freedom-loving Indonesians. The Republican leaders called for international intervention, and at a request from the United Nations Council, Holland stopped her action halfway. Since then day after day Dutch soldiers—and thousands of their Indonesian sympathisers—have been paying with their lives for this decision which encouraged the *pemoedas* to continue their illegal action.

Will justice come to Java now that events have been raised to the level of international politics?

In that beautiful evergreen island south of the equator, once an economic treasure of the world and a happy example of good understanding between peaceful races, forty-five million human beings now suffer and wait.

JOHAN FABRICIUS.

London, September, '47.

JAVA REVISITED

ON THE 6th of September, 1945, I left England by air, to visit my native country Java, where I had often longed to be during five years of London fog, drizzle and pale sunshine. I had not been back in Java since a few years before the war. I had made an unforgettable cruise through the Indian archipelago and had seen the country in process of happy development. I wondered what I should find on my return. One knew little of what had happened during the three and a half years of Japanese occupation, save the fact that the Japanese had reduced the Indies to a desperate state of poverty and unrest, and had left behind them a "time-bomb" in the form of a young generation whipped up to fierce racial hatred.

After a short intermezzo in Ceylon, where I had to wait for my credentials as a war correspondent of S.E.A.C. (South-East Asia Command, with its headquarters in New Delhi), I arrived in Singapore. That was on the 15th of September, exactly one month after the surrender of Japan. I had just missed my chance to board the Dutch cruiser *Tromp*, which, together with the English cruiser *Cumberland*, had left the day before and was now casting anchor outside Tandjoeng Priok, the harbour of Batavia.

While I hoped to continue my journey to Java within the next few days, there was much to see and to hear in Singapore itself. The Raffles Hotel, where I asked for a room, had been requisitioned as a temporary shelter for English civilians released from concentration camps. I saw at intervals little groups of them going in with grey haggard cheeks and hollow eyes. There were a few men in shorts and shirts grown much too big for them, but for the most part they were women, fantastically clad in little girls' frocks from the local stores, their bare feet in home-made sandals, their hair cut short, obviously by unskilled hands—ghostly apparitions from a dead world. Anxiously guarding their miserable baggage, they stood about in groups or diffidently seated themselves in the wicker arm-

chairs of the once-fashionable hotel and, steadying their voices, for the first time after three and a half years' imprisonment, ordered a cup of tea. Or suddenly they would gather round a woman in officer's uniform (a phenomenon from a new, undreamed of epoch), plying her with entreaties: for telegrams from England, news of a husband who had last been seen in such-and-such a camp. . . . The children, with the sallow complexions and strangely blond hair of European children bred in the tropics, ran about the lounge and shouted up and down the corridors, an unruly band on a voyage of discovery for new worlds. And outside a crowd of Malays, Tamils, Chinamen thronged round to stare at this unreal scene. Mostly, merely curious and somewhat incredulous, occasionally with something akin to pity. The downfall of the white race seemed to be even greater to-day than it had been before, in January, 1942. This could be read in the bland taces of the hotel-boys, too, who waited on these returned white guests with due respect, although possibly not with the same alacrity and subservience as a few weeks ago they had waited on the Japanese officers who sat with outstretched legs in these same chairs.

Since the hotel was still only half full the management offered me a bed for one night. In the bottom of the wardrobe I found a picture postcard with Japanese writing, depicting a geisha in a flowered kimono, with a rising sun flag in her hand, waving to a departing troopship. The bath appeared to be stopped up and the tap didn't run. Desolation and dirt, as always and everywhere in the wake of an army.

After some telephoning I discovered that "Public Relations", to which I was attached, since I had received my credentials, had taken over a couple of floors in Cathay Buildings, Singapore's skyscraper. I could get a lodging there, too, though I should have to forgo the luxury of a bed. A jeep was sent to collect my luggage, and I moved into the so-manyeth floor of the building, which gave me an extensive view of the town and harbour. Radio communication with England had already been established, and I was able that very evening to broadcast to the B.B.C. an account of my first impressions.

The town still looked impoverished and full of rubble, but new life was creeping in. The Chinese were filling their shop windows with everything they had been able to conceal from

the occupying forces in expectation of the return of the Straits dollar. They were pricing their goods sky high, and the groups of white ex-prisoners, who were wandering about in the hope of being able to acquire a pair of shoes and some clothes with the money which had been put at their disposal, were loudly proclaiming their indignation at such sharp practice. While they were in the concentration camps they had retained a vision of a pre-war world, and this first bitter disillusionment would not be their last. As a token of the illusory value of all paper money, Chinese street urchins were flourishing thick wads of occupation notes. They did not expect the emaciated men and women in civilian clothing to display any interest in such souvenirs, but they attached themselves like burrs to anyone in uniform. "Look here, sir, one thousand, two thousand, ten thousand Japanese dollars. Give what you like. Give half a dollar. Give a cigarette. Okay, take the lot, and give me just one cigarette. . . ."

A jubilant crowd formed round a group of Japanese prisoners of war, who, under the surveillance of a British-Indian soldier, were clearing away barbed-wire entanglements and filling in newly-dug trenches. The Japs were working naked to the waist in the broiling sun, and the sweat poured down from under the queer little caps on their dull black hair. They toiled away steadily without speaking or looking up; they bore away great lumps of stone, their short, stocky legs wound round with puttees sagging beneath them; their damp faces with the prominent cheek-bones remained expressionless. The Indian, his gun over his shoulder, was smoking a cigarette, an amused smile playing about his sensual, feminine mouth, even if he could not understand the witticisms and encouraging sallies in Malay and Chinese which arose from the onlookers. When an old woman rushed forward excitedly, apparently with the intention of attacking the prisoners with her bare fists, he took her by the arm and led her back to the crowd, who received her hilariously. The old creature, who could not herself see anything funny in her behaviour, continued to spit out her hatred in the direction of her defeated enemies, and now even a few Japanese lips parted in a stupid, rather embarrassed smile.

It was in the Changi camp, just outside the town, that I saw for the first time the horrors of Japanese prisons. Changi gaol,

where European women and children were also sent "for punishment", will never cease to haunt anyone who has once been detained in it. I shall not describe it. Changi hospital consisted of a number of open huts where sufferers from every imaginable tropical disease lay side by side in their beds, without the protection of mosquito nets and exposed to rain and wind. The latrine was frequently so far away that exhausted dysentery patients could not reach it in time, even supposing they had the strength to get up out of bed without help. English, Australian and Dutch doctors had to work in this "hospital" with almost no medicines or instruments, and, often themselves exhausted by under-nourishment and illness; they visited patients and spoke words of comfort to them until they dropped in their tracks.

The patients had not yet been evacuated when, with a Dutch physician, I walked along the rows of beds (bamboo stretchers), the object of vacant stares from right to left. So I saw conditions pretty much as they had been under Japanese occupation, although the worst of the filth had been cleaned up in the meantime. Half a dozen living skeletons under a primitive open-air shower, holding clasped in hands looking too big for their bodies, a newly-acquired precious piece of soap, was another sight I shall not easily forget. Later that same day I saw in Singapore a modern European hospital, with English and Chinese nurses. The white-painted beds with clean sheets were trundled out on to the veranda, whence the men could look out on to the garden full of flowers. I thought to myself that I could now realise something of the blessing this change meant for them.

I only had to wait three or four days in Singapore, but all the impressions piled up in my mind make it seem much longer in retrospect. Just as unreal as the drab daylight scene of the rebirth of European life in this eastern world were the joys of Singapore's resuscitated night-life. In the evening the great amusement parks, such as "The New World" were open, and anyone who had Straits dollars to burn could, for a fabulous price, order an immense Chinese meal, visit dancing-booths, where taxi-girls in close-fitting Shanghai dresses sat demurely waiting, or enjoy the back-chat in screeching Chinese and Malay theatres. Driving home afterwards in a rickshaw through

the still poorly-lighted or completely dark streets, one was oppressed by the desolation which shrouded this town.



I think it must have been on the Wednesday—four days after my arrival—that I met in the lounge of the Raffles Hotel a Dutch naval commander, Captain Huyer. He appeared to have just arrived and was looking for somewhere to stay—not a very easy matter by that time. I asked him whether he aspired to the luxury of a bed, or whether the floor of my room would serve him for one night. He assured me that he had not visualised anything so out of the way as a bed, and immediately went along with me. One advantage we enjoyed at any rate: the Singapore mosquitoes did not seem able to find their way as high as my floor in Cathay Building. And an army blanket wrapped round a few cotton vests and shirts can transform a stone floor into something approaching a spring mattress.

A good deed always brings its own reward. Captain Huyer, it seemed, was going to fly to Batavia on the following morning in his own plane, and he thought a corner for me might easily be found. When we got there I must fight things out for myself with the appropriate authorities.

The Dutch naval plane in which I had so unexpectedly been offered accommodation appeared to be a Catalina flying-boat, and through the glass dome of the turret we had a very good view. On board I found a few other Dutch officers, among them a captain of marines recently discharged from the Changi camp, whose imprisonment seemed merely to have hardened him. We all stared out anxiously—first at South-East Sumatra, Sunda Strait, the Thousand Islands, and, at last, the coast of Java itself, with its rice-fields and fish-pools backed by the mountains; and when eventually we came down on the brown waters of the harbour at Tandjoeng Priok, the young Dutch pilot turned round in his seat and said from the depths of his heart: "I've been longing to do this for the past three years." From the air he had drawn our attention to the traces of bombs among the Priok Harbour buildings, pointing to himself as much as to say that he had had a hand in it. . . .

The two cruisers lying outside the harbour began to signal, curious as to our identity. A grimy, rusty-looking Japanese ship, the *Kita-Maru* flew, hanging melancholy and motionless in the stillness of the eastern noontide, the black flag of surrender. Some of my companions got excited about the appearance of this ship, exclaiming: "Stolen from our Navy! It must be our old *Krakatau* (a mine-layer)!" Farther off lay a small ship belonging to the Nippon Salvage Company, and indeed there seemed to be nothing much besides salvage to be exported from this harbour now. We saw no living soul on either of the ships.

"Last time I was here it was more interesting," complained the pilot.

We stood on the fuselage and on the wings, gently swaying with the waves and congratulating ourselves that we had a cloudy sky above us. At length we were observed. A Japanese sentry in the look-out of the harbour-master's office had evidently decided to go down and give warning. Whereupon a dozen little men rushed out and jumped into a waiting motor-boat, which then set out in our direction. When they were within fifteen or twenty yards of us, they all stood stiffly to attention in recognition of the high-ranking officers on board our craft. Even the Jap at the wheel, who had to keep his slightly-bent position in order to steer the boat, put his free hand to his cap. Everywhere I went I encountered this devout respect for the uniform of the conqueror. I have seen whole car loads of Japanese soldiers spring to attention at the sight of a single English parachutist, who looked up somewhat bewildered and muttered something between his teeth about "abject little monkeys". In course of time this enthusiasm for saluting was to peter out; the docility of the little sadist from the prison camps declined as he saw the difficulties of the Allied liberators increase.

In the harbour-master's office, after a certain amount of delay, Captain Huyer succeeded in getting a telephone call through to Batavia. On the following morning we were to be furnished with transport to the town; meanwhile we were advised to ask for quarters on the Dutch cruiser *Tromp* for the night, since the road along the Antjol Canal was no longer considered safe after dark.

In Singapore I had received the first really disquieting reports about conditions in Java, but I still found it difficult to believe that the population could harbour any deep-seated enmity towards us. Before the war such a thing had not existed, at least not among the masses of the people, and any comparison between the Japanese and Dutch administrations surely could not fail to be in our favour. Hadn't Java in particular been our pride before the eyes of the world? I thought of the happy relations between white and brown that I had known, of the many Dutchmen who had given their whole lives to this country and had put all their energies into ensuring its prosperity and contentment, and I was inclined to attribute the present unrest in Java mainly to the brutalising influence of war in general, to the aftermath of our rapid and total defeat in 1942 and to Japanese calumnies. Once the Indonesian people saw that we wanted to rescue them from their economic distress and had no wish to stand in the way of their future self-government, but, on the contrary, saw the justice of it and were ready to co-operate in bringing their aspirations to a speedy fulfilment, then, surely, the old trust would be restored.

If only we had had more adequate means of helping, how much tragic misunderstanding and mistrust of our aims might have been avoided.

The *Tromp* sent a motor-boat to take us on board, and, with a sensation of disappointment, I saw the distance increase between ourselves and the shore. How strange—to know the hometown of my youth to be so near and yet not to be able to walk into it. On board the Dutch man-of-war we were given a hearty sailors' welcome, but as we ate our supper in the brightly-lit cabin my thoughts kept wandering. Later, taking a last turn on deck before retiring, my eyes rested on Java's coast line, which rose up black from the water. This country had always been full of mystery for me, but never before had there been any thought of hostility.

* * *

The next morning a launch took us ashore; accompanied by the screams of perpetually hungry gulls we passed along the gangway. The Japs had a couple of cars waiting for the officers

and a lorry for twenty or more Indonesian sailors who had got shore leave to visit their families. I was anxious to see how the people would receive these dark men in Dutch uniforms, so I threw my luggage on to the lorry, unaware of the condition of the asphalt road along the canal. We had to stand and could only keep our balance by holding on to the sides of the lorry with both hands as it rocked over cavities large enough to hold a pig. In this way we reached the suburbs of the town, once or twice stopping to put down a couple of men with "Royal Dutch Navy" inscribed on their caps, who obviously took a pride in the spotless uniforms, which in this piteously impoverished world made them into fine gentlemen. The people gazed at them with curiosity and apparently without resentment, occasionally smiling at the sight of some particularly well-fed blue-jacket.

Here and there the Republican flag had been hoisted on a house-top, and sometimes, too, the red-and-white could be seen on the windscreen of a car or on the handle-bars of a bicycle, but the general impression was rather of high-spirited larking; you had only to look at the beaming faces in the cars, packed with whole families, often covering three generations. The political slogans on the walls and railings, however, left no doubt as to their significance. For the most part they were written in English and obviously intended to impress any non-Dutch troops who might yet march into the country. "Indonesia never again the life-blood of any nation," I read. Sometimes there was an attempt at Yankee slang—"Van Mook and Van der Plas, wotcher doing here anyway?" Japanese propaganda during the occupation confined itself more and more to the most-feared opponent, America, England being dismissed with a few insults (Holland no longer counted at all), and, as a result of this presentation of things, the Republican propagandists had expected the first troops to land would be American marines.

The rattling, shabby Batavian tram-cars were chalked all over with inscriptions in Malay, such as "*Kemerdekaan adalah hak tiap-tiap bangsa*"—Freedom is the birthright of every nation. Later, from the balcony of my hotel, I was to see this sentence so often on passing vehicles that it began to haunt me, not least because as it stood, there was of course, no gainsaying it.

Incidentally, as a rule only part of this truth was discernible, since the native passengers clung to the sides of the cars like swarms of wasps, keeping their balance by hanging on to the open windows. (That this gave rise to accidents goes without saying.)

The European population which was still housed in the camps went about unmolested amid all this hostile propaganda. Figures similar to those I had already seen in Singapore wandered about the markets here too, carrying miserable shopping bags, or perhaps seated in a *tiga-roda* (a hired carriage on three wheels), being driven home with their purchases.

Looking round, I could scarcely bring myself to believe that I was really once again walking in the streets of Batavia. The town, whose houses had once been clean and white, with well-cared-for gardens and grounds, was now dirty and desolate; there was an air of unreality about it, probably due in the first place to the material and social débâcle of the white population, but also because, on the surface, the Japanese were still the unchallenged lords and masters. High Japanese officials whizzed past me, sitting well back in their Buicks and Packards, only the gleam of a pair of spectacles disclosing them to my view. At the wheel would be a Japanese soldier, swelling with pride, and, as they passed, the Japanese sentries outside the big building sprang to attention and presented arms. True, English and Dutch officers enjoyed this distinction also, but how many of them were there? Had any troops been landed on Saturday? I tried in vain to detect them. To all appearances Batavia was still completely a town occupied by the Japanese, and while we walked about behaving as though it were the most natural thing in the world, we couldn't help a secret feeling of amazement that we were allowed to do this instead of being arrested and carried off to prison.

As I try to revive my memories of that first day, I call to mind a little scene which I witnessed. The Japanese sentry standing outside the green-painted (camouflaged) "Harmonie", once the most select club of Batavia, called out to a passing street urchin, who was strolling along carelessly under the mistaken notion that the defeat of the Mikado absolved him from paying respect to Japanese authority. The little chap did not wait to be told what was required of him; he turned round at

once, made a deep bow with his arms held stiffly to his sides, and then continued his stroll. A couple of fruit-sellers squatting near the bridge on the opposite side of the road smiled wryly at this forced tribute to the last rays of a sun already set. But the imperial Japanese sentry was satisfied.

The Hotel des Indes and the other big hotels around the Koningsplein (the immense square in the centre of Batavia) fulfilled the same function as the Raffles Hotel in Singapore; they took in the women and children from the tragically overcrowded camps. The press were to be accommodated in a few rooms of the Hotel des Galeries, which was exactly opposite the Harmonie and the Hotel des Indes. I was allotted a room, which I shared with a Dutch journalist, Robert Kiek, who had come from Australia. He was an indefatigable news hunter and had already managed to lay his hands on a press car, in which he was out and about all day and night. Simin, our *djongos* (native servant), found time in those first days to clean our shoes and make our beds; later, when four or five of us were crowded into one room, there was so much work waiting for him that he did not even attempt to make a start; it was very hot, too, because the rains would not break, and there was so much exciting political news to discuss with his companions—we could hear their whispering, laughing voices all day long in the corridor. About that time Simin began to sport a red-and-white emblem, and thought it necessary to make excuses for himself; it was only because he did not want to be waylaid in the street and beaten up; as *djongos* to white officers his position was somewhat precarious, he explained, although the *pemoedas* (soldiers of the Republican Youth Army) should realise that he was anxious to earn a living for his wife and child. Occasionally Simin would stay away altogether for a few days, but he always turned up again and every time had a perfect excuse to which no objection could be raised: the *pemoedas* had threatened him. The hotel could hardly withhold his weekly wage on that account.

We were to hear more and more often this word *pemoeda*. The *pemoedas* seemed to be everywhere and nowhere, mostly, however, innocently disguised so that my English and American colleagues more than once asked me to point one out to them. This was not easy, but one could guess their presence

by the embarrassed grin of a fruit-seller in the market, who suddenly declared that he had nothing more to sell, looking round cautiously and paying no attention to the money pressed into his hand for mangoes or bananas already purchased. When the drivers of the *tiga-roda's*, who were lined up outside our hotel waiting to snap up European passengers, sprang into their seats and trundled off without a fare, it meant that a patrolling *pemoeda* could not be far off. And, indeed, it was not only the market vendors and the *tiga-roda's* who had to reckon with the power of this nationalist army of half-grown boys. Even the leaders of the Republic were under strict surveillance. The armed *pemoedas* who sat with outstretched legs in Mohamad Hatta's (the Republican Vice-President) front hall, laughing and smoking cigarettes and able to hear every word that was spoken inside, were certainly not only there for his protection.

I had several commissions from Dutch and English friends to get news for them, if possible, about members of their families from whom they had heard nothing for the past four years. I, therefore, paid an early visit to the Red Cross Information Bureau, which was situated in the dismal, battered Waterlooplein. Outside the building groups of women stood talking, many of them with tear-stained faces. Children stood silently beside them, looking up at their mothers with prematurely serious eyes. Inside, seated at separate tables, were some half-dozen girls, who spent their time scanning long lists and never losing their patience amid the pressure of the crowd, the heat, and the waves of emotion that surrounded them. The answer they were able to give was as momentous as Destiny; it opened wide the door to new hopes, or closed it for ever. Or, perhaps, it merely prolonged the tortures of uncertainty.

"I haven't got his name here, madam, but ask the young lady over there in the corner; she has the lists from Siam. Oh, you've been to her. . . . Have you tried the Philippines yet?" Shaking her head silently, the woman, who had said good-bye to her husband on the 7th December, 1941, went to try the Philippines—there were still some prisoners of war there.

For four years this uncertainty had been endured, but, at least, it had been shared by thousands of others. The spiritual union with your husband, which had become intensified to a dreamlife of undisturbed bliss, had grown to be a real comfort

to you. The exciting reality of a reunion would be almost terrifying. But your peace had been disrupted; crude, blinding daylight was rending the dusk; you heard other women crying out in wild delight: "Jan is in Bangkok! He saw our boy a year ago in Palembang!" These words awakened a terrible fear in your heart—that you might be left behind alone. You could not close an eye all night; all you could do was pray. When you awoke in the morning you decided to be brave and believe firmly that Theo, your husband, the father of your child, *would* be found again, although his name was not on any of the lists; that he had *not* been on board the torpedoed ship which had been on its way to Japan with a cargo of prisoners of war. "No one could be saved because they were all shut up in the hold. . . ." You had been dumb with horror as you overheard these words. Day in day out you go to the Bureau, which opens at eight o'clock. "I'm sorry, madam, but I thought there might have been some new lists—" "Not to-day, madam, but we are expecting some. If you have time, come along again to-morrow morning."

If you have time—of course, you have plenty of time.

So back to the camp again, where nobody talks of anything but who has been found and who is marked on the lists as missing or dead. All that hubbub around you. That ever repeated question: "Any news?"—"No, I've got to go back to-morrow morning." The blinding sunlight. The smells of this country, which is not your birthplace and whose language you have only learnt to stammer. These Indies, to which you are not bound by childhood memories, where everything has remained strange to you, even after living for three years so close to its soil, existing on a handful of rice or tapioca. At home in Holland everything would be easier to bear; you would not feel so hopelessly forsaken and alone there. Only the other day you had a telegram from your sister in Leyden. Your mother is still alive. And everything would be good and wonderful, if only you knew that Theo. . . . You haven't the heart to send an answer to the telegram so long as you don't know what to say about *him*.



If you happen to know Batavia—at the end of Trivelli Lane, that is on the westernmost side of the town, is situated the Tjideng camp. This was the first camp I visited, on the very afternoon of my arrival. Women and children swarmed everywhere, mostly bare-footed and dressed in what looked like patched-up beach clothes. In each of the modest dwellings in this camp—a blot on Java's soil—the occupying power had housed some score of women and their offspring; even the lavatories had been allotted to them as dwelling-rooms—indeed, these offices no longer had any other function, since at a very early stage the drainage and water systems had ceased to work.

In the little plots of ground in front and at the back they camped, cooked, drank tea and received visitors; patched mattresses were hanging out on a line to air; life here must in course of time have become a continual uneven battle with filth and vermin. The street gutter served for drainage; was it possible they could ever have become accustomed to the foul, sweet smell which pervaded it? Children possess an amazing power of adapting themselves to circumstances. When they weren't helping with the housework and dragging buckets of water from the communal tap, I saw them sitting on the ground playing with whatever the earth had to offer them: little stones which represented shop-goods as well as the money with which to pay for them; bits of broken crockery were a much envied possession; "meals" were served on plates cut out of banana-leaves, and little girls played mother to dolls made out of a few rags sewn together. These children, at any rate, were not unhappy, particularly now that there were so many new and exciting things going on! Undreamed of luxuries had arrived in the camp; one lucky little creature had become the owner of a pair of reins with bells on them, and he was never without "horses" eager to be put in harness. A rumour was going the rounds, too, of a football which had been promised by one of the officers from the *Tromp*.

I had hardly set foot in the camp when I was surrounded by a dozen or so little nippers, who had been hanging about the entrance on the look out for the latest sensation. Two of them seized my hands immediately and were asking whom I wanted to see. "Are you a daddy?" one little girl enquired, look-

ing up at me with candid, clear blue eyes. When I nodded "yes", they all clamoured to know—"Whose daddy are you, then?"

"Daddies" were the great phenomenon of their lives. For years they had heard their mummies talking about them, shaping them into legendary figures, rather like Santa Claus. One day Daddy would come, and then they would have a house to themselves and go across the sea in a ship, and everything would be wonderful beyond imagination, with presents and goodness knows what besides. Now things were beginning to move; real daddies came walking in at the camp gates and sometimes they actually did bring presents with them. They looked quite different from what one had imagined, sometimes terrifyingly different, and the great adventure of the ship and the house-all-to-yourself seemed to be a long way off, but Mummie was happy and didn't cry any more like two of the other ladies in the same house, and, after all, it was something of a privilege to be able to point to such a man and say to your less fortunate little play-mates: "That's my daddy."

While I am writing these reminiscences, many a school-teacher in Holland has already begun to sigh over the difficult problem of these camp children from the Indies. They have seen, heard and experienced so much in their young lives. Enterprising women started schools in the camps with improvised equipment. But the children were undernourished and overwrought; all their thoughts were concentrated on thinking out ways of getting something to eat. And—worst of all—they had grown up in the shadow of a monstrous injustice, against which one's only weapons were lying and deceit. Brute force reigned, demonstrating that might is right. True, much the same held good for occupied Holland, but it must have been far worse in the camps, guarded by foreign soldiers, where women and children were crowded together in noisy houses and where a father was lacking. Little lads of ten and eleven tried to assume the masculine authority where the mother was too weak to fulfil the double role which fate had allotted to her. Boys of twelve and thirteen were sometimes so much men already that the Japanese considered it necessary to make the harsh general rule of removing them altogether from the women's camps.

What problems these women had to wrestle with, and what strength of mind the vast majority of them have shown! I frequently heard it said in the men's camps: "They have been heroines! They deserve to have statues erected to them, if only for the way they dared to laugh in the face of the Japs. Sometimes the Japs succeeded in cowing *us*, but they never got the better of our women!"

It did not occur to the women themselves to rank their courage so high. They despised their little gaolers too heartily to see any virtue in defying their barbaric methods of punishment. And they considered it only natural to continue to carry out their maternal duties towards their children in these heart-rending conditions. In the absence of the husband, a framed photograph had to act as symbol of the paternal authority. "Remember to behave so that you can look father straight in the face later on. It's not his fault that we are alone. The Japs have taken him away. But, just to spite them, we'll behave exactly as though he *was* here."

When I had to go into any of the houses to enquire about a name or an address, I could see at once how these women had preserved their self-respect through everything. They answered my questions calmly, frankly, sometimes even humorously, and, moreover, insisted on acting hostess in the garage or shed where ten or twelve of them might be living together. They were living royally now, they told me, had an abundance of everything. "What will you have? A cup of coffee? A mango? I'm afraid we're rather short of chairs, we had to leave them behind in the camp where we were before, but if you can manage with a box?"

And when we were sitting down together, they began to talk—about the now fugitive Japanese camp commandant, upon whom the full moon had such a remarkable effect; at such times he made all the women come out late at night; even the sick had to be carried out of their houses and laid along the roadside. Then he walked along the rows with a devilish grin on his face looking at them intently to see that they all bowed to him with due respect; if one of them was not quick enough with her obeisance, he slapped her on both cheeks and for a quarter of an hour on end poured out a string of abuse in Japanese and Malay against her, against all the women in this

damned camp, against the whole white race, which Dai Nippon was going to crush. And while he stood thus working himself into a passion, his clenched fists trembled and the veins stood out on his forehead. "In the end we almost took pity on him, for he probably couldn't help himself; he must have been a lunatic. He himself told our camp leaders once that, in their own interests, they must on no account answer him back when he was raving like that."

They certainly did not attempt to answer him back, but a woman can say a lot without words. Even the calm, ironical way these emaciated white women looked him up and down was more than he could bear. It maddened him, and he punished them by depriving them of food, letting the rice they had been cooking in the kitchen go bad so that it had to be thrown away.

The bamboo hedge around the camp was a perpetual source of temptation. Malay fruit and egg sellers swarmed persistently along the palings, nosing after any money hidden in the camp—how the inmates managed to keep any back from the Japanese after the innumerable house-to-house visitations and personal searches, remains a mystery. Clothes were offered in barter and greedily accepted. This clandestine trade through the gaps in the enclosure could cost the seller dear too, if he was caught at it, but the vendors risked punishment for the sake of the good profit they made in these times of the nation's universal distress. And the women were irresistibly drawn to the forbidden fence by their own nagging hunger or by the desire to spare their children from starvation. They tried to avoid detection by a system of warning signals—before the Japanese guard could get near enough to see what was actually going on, the purchases were long since divided up and hidden away. The resourceful Jap, however, found a way of getting the better of them. He invented the pseudo-fruit-seller, who seized hold of a hand that was pushed through the fence, and gave the alarm.

On one single occasion a woman acted as informer. Such treachery can, I suppose, be explained by cruel physical distress. In return for a promised favour—certainly nothing very much—she went to the guards and warned them that bartering was going on. The soldiers hurried to the spot, but they were just too late. A strict decree was then issued in the camp; unless

the guilty parties confessed immediately, the camp leaders would have to bear the punishment. The women accepted the challenge—the whole camp came forward to confess guilt. The commandant raged and blustered. Then, worse still, he came out with an amiable smile on his face and picked out a few women at random, who were seized and thrashed and then had their heads close-shaved. These unfortunates were thereafter marked suspects and ran the risk, on the next occasion, of being the first to rouse his ire. As I said before, now it was all over, the women spoke with amusement of the hysteria of the wild beast in uniform. They were able to laugh at the stratagems which everyone of them had devised merely to get something to eat. They showed me comic drawings in which they made fun of their own misery—certainly not works of art, but all the more moving for that. They ridiculed the Japanese mania for spying, which led the guards sometimes, in the middle of the night, to institute a search for such things as hidden money or a home-made electric cooking-stove. How utterly silly they looked when they prowled round in their clumsy shoes, stumbling over the sleeping women, to find nothing! But there are some things about which even now one cannot laugh. The women told me of a five-year-old boy who died of hunger-œdema. When he was buried the commandant ordered the whole camp to put in an appearance and observe a minute's silence while, with a certain amount of ceremony, a soldier laid a bunch of bananas on the little coffin. "Apparently that is the custom at Japanese funerals; the bananas were buried with the corpse. If only they had given the little chap some fresh fruit while he was alive, he might still have been playing with the others. . . ."

The nightmare was over now—the endless period of waiting and suffering and being humiliated, of going into the rice-field with your spade in order to earn an extra handful of rice with some evil-smelling meat offal. Liberation had come, but how different it was from what these women had pictured to themselves.

For one brief moment the illusion lasted: when Dutch aircraft dived low over the camp dropping orange-coloured hand-bills and when the Japanese commandant had them all mustered to tell them in his best Malay that, although Dai Nippon had

not won the war as had been his intention, the Emperor had decided all the same to make peace rather than suffer the sacrifice of still more people to the newest, terrible weapons. The women understood the significance of this humane Imperial decision. Wild with delight, they fell into each other's arms and indulged in a good cry in anticipation of the wonderful moment when they would be able to sob their hearts out on their husband's breasts.

After that they waited, day after day, for the tanks of the Allies to come rolling up. They expected to see parachutists descend, to hear the roar of gunfire coming nearer and nearer. They were prepared for all the dangers of war. They looked forward to seeing sturdy young men marching through the gates, seizing the Japs by the scruff of the neck and hurling them out of the camp; how glorious to be a witness of that! What actually took place? For a time nothing at all. Then a few white hospital orderlies and a doctor came to inspect the camp, obviously with the approval of the Japanese, who after the visit provided more and better food. On Saturday the Allies were to make a landing! After hours of watching in a state of almost unbearable excitement, two or three cars turned up, their occupants wearing English uniforms. Cheers—the Dutch National Anthem—God save the King—a couple of war correspondents asking questions. And now, a week later, the camp is still in the hands of the Japanese commandant, and the Allied officers return his military salute correctly. Where are the troops to take over the camp? Have we really won the war, or is it, after all, only a compromise?

With permission from the leaders, you can leave the camp for a few hours—go to the market and make some purchases. You are given some money for the purpose. The dozen or so Dutch husbands who have returned are allowed to visit their wives in the camp. Naturally they can't come there to live with you, and there is, for the time being, very little prospect of getting permission to return to your own house. Many of them have been taken over by Indonesians, and it is still not considered safe—oh, that word "safe"!

So the women have to stay, packed together, in these horrible camps. The Tjideng camp, of which I have been speaking, is probably the worst of the five which I saw in Batavia, but

Struiswijk, Adek, Makasser and Kramat camps are not much better.

And the West-monsoon is due again. "When it rains, you know, the water pours in through the garage door, and our mattresses get sopping wet. How much longer, do you think, before we can get back to our own houses? Of course, we realise that all our furniture has been stolen—but it would be so wonderful to feel you were at home again! Just to have space to breathe in would be such a luxury. To be able to be *alone* in a room! And—to have a little quiet. Besides, the first place our husbands will go to find us will be at home! How can we receive them here?" Apprehension and despair creep into their voices. To fly into your husband's arms after all these years with dozens of people standing round you, above all strangers, with whom one has been packed together like sardines in a tin, but whose company one would never have sought voluntarily. Are they to hear every word you say to each other in the first overwhelming rapture. . . ?

I saw the Japanese gaolers walking about the roads of the camp—short, thick-set, bow-legged, their bayonets still fixed to their rifles. Lonely figures in this world, they passed through the groups of playing children, who no longer moved out of their way. The fruit-vendors outside the enclosure no longer needed to whisper; proper openings had been provided in the fencing where purchases could be made under the very eyes of the commandant. "*Maoe pisang, njonya? Djeroek manis? Papaya?*" Passing by, the Jap would give a glance, sleepily raising his eyebrows; possibly his dull brain experienced some surprise that it was no longer part of his duty to interfere. Looking back once more as he walked on, he tripped over a stone on the path.

"We don't even see him nowadays, that Japanese soldier," the women assured me. "But we want to hear what you have to tell us. What does Holland look like now? Is it true that the Germans have murdered practically all the Jews? Oh God, how frightful! Has London suffered a great deal from the raids? Why isn't Churchill prime minister any more? What books have been published? Are we terribly behind the times?"

No, these women have not gone under after three and a half years of the most merciless, humiliating imprisonment. They

are still standing on their feet, despite all their misery, and humanity has reason to be proud of them.



"Public Relations" were allotted an office in the former French Consulate, west of the Koningsplein. The Japs had used it as a court-room. The buildings in the grounds at the back were shut off by a high wall and heavily barred; in the hall within there was a platform where the Japanese military judge had his seat, flanked by an athlete, naked to the waist, carrying an unfurled whip—to encourage the accused and the witnesses to keep nothing back. As far as Tanah Abang, on the other side of the canal, so I was told, you had to stop your ears to deaden the heartrending shrieks of the men and women who had been "tried" at this bar. The only sound issuing from the building now was the innocent click of the typewriters of correspondents and reporters.

But one day a Dutchman came and begged to be allowed to see again the cell where he had been imprisoned. He rushed up to it excitedly and insisted on explaining in detail how he had been forced to squat on his knees in the Japanese fashion until he could not feel his legs; the warder had kept a strict watch to see that he did not turn his head to left or right. The memory seemed to have obsessed him all this time, and this re-visiting of the bare, white-washed room helped him to get over it. He went away again, relieved and calm—one man, at any rate, who felt himself liberated in the deeper sense of the word!

In an ante-room sat the Chinese clerks, who neatly numbered and entered our cables, so that, in the somewhat passionate scramble for journalistic priority, no one should be unjustly favoured. They were discreet, diligent and invariably good-tempered, and, besides speaking Dutch and Malay, they had quite a good smattering of English. To certain favourites among our number they would occasionally give a tip on the quiet; they knew things sometimes long before the authorities became cognisant of them, and they frequently understood much better than the newly-arrived foreign correspondents the significance of what was going on in this part of the world. I often wished that they could draft the telegrams; many misunderstandings

might thus have been avoided. Only later, when travelling in the United States, I became aware how gross and unfortunate had been the misunderstandings concerning events in Java.

Those Chinese clerks! How they must have laughed among themselves at the strange race of journalists, at the completely contradictory cables which they presented for transmission, and at the mad rivalry among reporters to be the first with the latest news sensation, which *they* knew would turn out to be a *canard*. I can still see their delighted faces and the merry twinkle in their eyes as I entered in the morning when they were talking about the latest looting-raid down town. "Would you care to buy a bicycle by any chance, sir? If so, you should have a look round the markets to-day. But you must remember they're only small Japanese bikes, not quite the size for you. However, you might find one you could manage with." Peals of laughter.

Night after night in the Old Town warehouses and big shops were robbed of their complete stock. All through the occupation, while there was still a chance of carrying off all this war-booty (some of their own exports, as in the case of the bicycles in question), the Japanese had had them well guarded—but what reason had they now to prevent the looting?

Dutch, American and English firms were the chief victims, but often also rich Chinese merchants. The latter, realising that any complaints to the authorities were useless, with the cynical realism of their race, sometimes bought back their own goods, at receivers' prices, and then made a "profit" by disposing of them in the black market. It seemed too risky to keep goods in reserve in anticipation of the new Dutch money, so they went on buying and selling, driving prices up higher and higher. I don't know whether in a modest way, our clerks had their little flutter. As Chinamen they would certainly have large families, and that alone must have driven them to indulge in illegal practices; their occasional rises in salary could not possibly have kept pace with the ever faster, bewildering fall in the value of the Japanese Occupation money, which was still in circulation.



For the first few days we were allowed to make use of military facilities to send our cables, on condition that we economised

in eloquence. Every day our little group, still quite small, was allotted a few thousand words for telegraphing abroad, and this allotment was divided between us. It was never enough, for all at once Java was in the headlines all over the world, and the London and New York dailies and news-agencies clamoured for more material. We sent extra cables by air to Singapore, for transmission from there; some of us went on board the *Cumberland* and the *Tromp*, who were in wireless communication with headquarters. What exactly happened to our telegrams in Singapore we did not know, but they seemed to arrive in London occasionally, five days late. The real journalists among us tore their hair. I left mine alone, partly because I've none too much to spare, and also because, as was made apparent by these circumstances, I had not yet become a real journalist. But there were occasions when I did feel I was taking part in the game going on around me—the competition to be first with an interesting news item. A telegram of congratulation from the B.B.C. taught me for the first time the magic significance of the word "scoop". Still, if I became really interested in anything, I was inclined to forget my duty as a correspondent, whereas the contrary should have happened.

In due course, to everyone's relief, we were allotted our own transmitters. From now on there were the constant buzz of an electric motor in the forecourt of "Public Relations", and half-naked Australian wireless operators toiled away in the mobile wireless shed, on which the tropical sun beat down all day and to which the mosquitoes had access all night. Oh, those mosquitoes! They seemed to be the only living creatures to have flourished under Japanese occupation. At a later date the English inaugurated a campaign against them with D.D.T. Day after day, a special aircraft sprayed this vaunted miracle-working poison over the town, and it did help somewhat, or, at least, so we imagined. . . .

As a result of the sudden world interest in the happenings in Java, correspondents began to turn up from all parts of the globe; at one time I counted no less than fifty. They were certainly a mixed bag. Side by side with well-informed, serious Englishmen, like Christopher Buckley of the *Daily Telegraph*, who had the air of a professor, I recollect some Australian roughriders, who had come to Java in search of adventure. Arming

themselves with a couple of revolvers, their hairy chests bared, sombreros on their heads, the legs of their khaki breeches tucked into their boots, they drove straight into the revolutionary interior "to see what it was all about", trusting to journalistic bluff and the luck of the bold to see them through. Two of these *chevaliers sans peur et sans reproche* were reported missing for a short time; rumour had it that they had been lynched in Samarang. But nothing of the kind. They turned up again, robbed, it is true, of all the treasures they had picked up on their pilgrimage (such as Djocja silver and brand-new typewriters, bought for a mere song in those parts where the Japanese "banana money" had still its full value), robbed, too, of their firearms and most of their clothes, but alive and kicking, wearing their last shirt and breeches, and with scoops that left everyone else miles behind.

I remember, too, the American who pinned the Stars and Stripes on his coat, back and front, so that the Indonesian snipers hidden behind the trees would not take him for an English or Dutch Imperialist. Then there were the British-Indian correspondents, who, smiling amiably at everyone, clung together like a group of schoolboys, and always discussed their communications with each other in their own language, which no one else understood. All their thoughts were centred on the events in their own country, and for them Java was merely an arena where their own battle was being fought out in miniature. Their cabled reports were always drawn up in the light of their own struggle, and certainly would be so read in Bombay and Calcutta. If they spoke of oppressed Indonesians and Dutch Imperialism, this was meant to be interpreted as oppressed and Indians and English Imperialism. They knew exactly what line they were expected to take.

Relying on their dark skins and their well-known sympathy with the Indonesian revolution, they unsuspectingly ventured to show themselves among the insurrectionists in Surabaya, and it was a great shock to them when they were seized, thrown into prison and very roughly handled; they returned from this expedition completely bewildered. Yet they should have counted themselves lucky to escape with their lives, for by degrees there was growing up a race-hatred between Indonesians and Indians, which expressed itself in bloody excesses on both sides, even

in cases where a common religion might have been expected to bridge the gulf.

If at first I was the only correspondent in Java representing the B.B.C. and *The Times* (who had commissioned me to write a series of articles), I soon received support. Richard Sharp, the Burma correspondent of the B.B.C., as well as Ian Morrison, the regular Far East correspondent of *The Times*, hastened to Batavia.

Ian Morrison (author of *Malayan Postscript*) had been born in China and was a unique figure among the correspondents, with his strange light-coloured, rather wondering eyes in a pale, delicate, kindly boyish face. I used sometimes to suspect that, between his cables, he wrote verses in praise of his wife and children in Australia. During the press conferences with the English, Dutch and Indonesian authorities he often impressed me and others by the questions he asked, always in the same pleasant, soft voice, and always singularly searching and to the point. The authorities soon learnt to reckon with this frank, observant dreamer, who never missed the weak spot in an argument.

At a later date he won our particular sympathy because he of all people had the bad luck to be wounded. It seemed that his car had not drawn up quickly enough at one of the barricades set up in the town. For a time he had to go about with his arm in a sling and had to type out his telegrams with one hand. Fortunately for him *The Times* was more interested in the thoroughness of reports than in scoops. Anyway the papers could always get their hot news from Reuters and U.P., and it was particularly between the reporters of the news agencies that the life and death battle to be first in the field was waged.

However great my personal liking for Morrison, in our commentaries on what was taking place we often expressed directly opposed views. It goes without saying that this could not fail to provoke a protest from the London office. Equally it was not difficult to guess where, in a case of conflicting opinions, the preference would fall. From the democratic post-war point of view Holland stood in the dock. As a Dutchman, and moreover born in Java, I was looked upon as prejudiced. I, on the other hand, sometimes wondered whether the world was not blindly prejudiced against the Dutch.

I got into touch with the Indonesian leaders, and in my conversations with the best of them I could not but respect and sympathise with their ideals. Indeed, I felt sure that, had I myself been a young Indonesian intellectual, I should have thought and spoken as they did. When their criticisms of the Dutch régime were, in my judgment, unjust, I imputed it to the passionate feelings which I sensed only too well beneath the mask of Eastern politeness. There were some among them who had the memory of bitter personal experience. That our East Indian government had often acted shortsightedly and ungenerously; that, side by side with Dutch enterprise and progress, the Indonesian people had encountered Dutch national pride—all that I knew. But, even if these young nationalist leaders had been theoretically right in everything they said, the fact would have remained that we were witnesses of a very much less just and attractive practice. While the leaders in Batavia were talking affably and high-mindedly, plunder and murder, abduction and tyranny were rife throughout the country. Even Soekarno's word seemed to have little weight with the fanatical gangs who, with his name on their lips, exercised their criminal Terror. After having incited them to violence for years, now that the opportunity had come to practise that violence, he vainly sought to restrain them.

It goes without saying that the President was anxious that his recent past of collaboration with the Japanese should be forgotten. Soekarno now displayed the utmost goodwill towards the very same English army who, before their arrival, he had threatened to crush with a crowbar (with the help of Japan). It seemed, however, that this past history had been obliterated automatically; the democratic world sympathised in advance with any nation that was struggling for self-determination, and Soekarno, as leader of such a nation, became a champion of the democratic ideal even before he himself was aware of it. His utterances received credence far and wide at the cost of Holland's good name, and every attempt to prove the purity of our motives and to expose the gross calumnies of our régime were greeted with distrust and branded as attempts to vindicate an unjust cause.

I might have brought myself to swallow this injustice—the current was too strong to swim against it—but my heart bled at

the sight of lovely Java being transformed into a hell before our eyes. Whoever might be right—Indonesians or Dutch—could we not first unite to restore peace and order and save the country from total destruction? A naïve wish, no doubt—every suggestion of the kind was interpreted as calculated cunning; the Dutch wanted to see peace and order restored so that, with an army raised in the meantime, they could strike their blow and continue their colonial oppression as of old.

Ian Morrison, more of a theorist than myself, shut his eyes to the multitude of painful incidents attendant on this revolution, seeing only what he considered the essential: the birth-throes of a nation. Even had I wished to do so, I could not possibly have adopted such an objective attitude towards happenings, whose painfulness I felt so bitterly. After a few attempts to arrive at some method of co-operation by dividing the terrain, we had to give it up. In consultation with *The Times*, the *Observer* invited me to contribute a weekly article. I accepted, but after a few cables was again pressed to be more objective. Since I could not separate the events from the thoughts and feelings they aroused in me, I myself concluded the arrangement to send communiqués.

If the B.B.C. had not remained faithful to me, I might no longer have been able to make use of the almost indispensable facilities of the journalist. But in that immense organisation, with its numerous branches, there was room, if need be, for differences of opinion. Personally I got on very well with my colleague Richard Sharp, and we shared our work as much as possible. One day we had a pleasant surprise. A van, containing apparatus for making gramophone records, arrived for us with the compliments of the B.B.C. The technician who accompanied it bore the name Angel—and certainly he lived up to it. His good temper, his zeal and his helpfulness were irresistible, and, as though he wore an invisible halo, he went about, unconcerned and unharmed, in the two opposing camps. For the rest, I have never encountered anyone who had his capacity for being able to sit down on a chair and immediately fall asleep at will; a characteristic which is itself an indication of an easy conscience.

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Talking of painful incidents attendant on this revolution, I often had reason to wish that certain correspondents, who constituted themselves the mouthpieces of the Indonesian leaders, had also taken note of the statements made by the Republican press and radio—utterances not meant for export, but for home consumption only.

The Malay language, in which these utterances were made, contributed to the fact that they usually remained a closed book for most of us. The paper *Merdeka* (Freedom), which appeared in Batavia with the sanction of Supreme Command, carried on a daily campaign of incitement and calumny against the Dutch, and the English did not come off much better. *Ra'jat* (The People) and *Soeara Indonesia* (The Voice of Indonesia) were even more outrageous in their twisting of the facts. The style of the articles may have been naïve, intended as they were for a childlike and credulous public, but the object behind them was very much less inoffensive.

The instinct of cruelty, latent in every primitive nation, was deliberately aroused by stories of the "righteous penalties" which had been imposed on Chinese and Indonesian spies. The indignant populace at Bekassi (a *pemoeda* centre to the east of Batavia), for instance, knew very well how to deal with such traitors. They were tied to the back of a car and dragged over stones "until nothing was left but their hands". In order to make a deeper impression on popular imagination, this account included an example of supernatural powers, which found ready credence among the superstitious people of this archipelago. One of the victims, a *hadji* (a former Mecca pilgrim) who had been working for the Dutch, had been sufficiently versed in magic to survive the car ordeal, but another *hadji* at Bekassi was apparently an even greater magician and had stabbed him to death with one dagger-thrust in the belly.

I have in front of me an article from *Ra'jat*, dated November 29, 1945, which, in its own way, strikes me as no less questionable.

It runs:

"In the recent struggle our nation succeeded in taking prisoner all the Japanese in East Java. They amount to many thousands. On examination it became plain that amongst

these Japanese prisoners of war there are many socialists and communists who were forced by the Japanese to take part in the subjugation of Indonesia. When our nation had thrown off its shackles, these men returned to their previous socialist and communist beliefs and showed understanding of our present struggle. We revolutionaries do not intend to hand over these Japanese men as prisoners of war to the English. If necessary, these Japanese men will be armed and turned against the English. As our Republican radio has told you already—if Russia or Chungking, or any other of the Allies whom we trust, made a landing here, to *them* we would hand over the Japanese prisoners.”

In the same number of *Ra'jat* I find another article signed *Bang Golok* (Brother Axe) who refers affectionately to himself throughout in the third person, and under the title “Demoralisation” accuses the Dutch as follows:

“Not only do they squabble among themselves; they bring up their children to be robbers and knaves. Of set purpose they give their children weapons with which to persecute and rob passers-by. Up till now Bang Golok remained convinced that they would repent of their conduct towards us, but their greatest crimes are now committed against their own children. However execrable and corrupt a man may be, he will wish to see his children grow up into honourable and virtuous men, but parents who wilfully incite their children to devilish deeds are better swept off the face of this earth. Bang Golok’s respect for the character of the Dutch—still held in high esteem by the people—long since diminished appreciably, but Bang Golok would never have credited that they could sink lower than wild beasts, for these men at least love their young and would never expose them to danger. Our enemies *command* their children to behave in a way which must inevitably bring disaster upon them. In future these children will not be able to escape the reward of their evil deeds.”

Thus, in a fatherly way and under the cloak of a well-inten-

tioned warning, he incites to acts of violence against European children. And the incitement was not to be without fruit.

Sjahrir, the noblest of the Revolutionary personalities, fought courageously against such evils of the revolution, but he remained a voice crying in the wilderness.

The Nationalist leaders believed that they would be able to put a stop to the bloodshed, if we would only withdraw. But what guarantees had they to offer us? What we had seen of their authority over their own people was certainly not convincing. Were we to expose a whole population of European, Eurasian and Chinese citizens to the dangers of such an experiment?

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I have asked myself whether we Dutchmen, by making our position clearer, could have prevented world opinion from turning so violently against us. I hardly think so. Whatever our intentions, we inescapably represented the idea of reaction in a world which had just settled a bloody account with reaction. Moreover, from a journalistic point of view, we were in the shadow; in the limelight stood the leaders of the Revolution. I have heard American journalists, newly arrived by air, immediately ask for the addresses and telephone numbers of Soekarno and Sjahrir. Who precisely was in the right—the Indonesians or the Dutch—they would probably try to discover in due course (always supposing any doubt existed), but the Indonesians were “news”.

Another factor harmful to the Dutch interests was the contrast between the lack of imagination in our Information Department, together with the surliness of certain of our publicity-shy higher officials, and the hearty welcome offered to the press by the Nationalists. Even journalists are only human. The officials of the Dutch Information Bureau considered it a duty to observe a strict neutrality towards all foreign correspondents, regardless of how they might have expressed themselves in their reports concerning our past colonial administration and our present intentions. The Revolution, however, had its friends among the correspondents, to whom special interviews were granted and who were provided with “scoops”; thus a certain

amount of jealousy was bred, which was by no means to the disadvantage of the Nationalists. To their credit let me say at once that they also received their opponents (or those they regarded as such) with eastern hospitality and courtesy, regaling them with tea, iced beer and Indian sweetmeats. In comparison with this the press conferences of the Dutch authorities were, in every sense of the word, dry.

A man like Van der Plas, who represented the Dutch civil government before the arrival of Dr. van Mook, should certainly not be accused of ungraciousness and inflexibility, but he was an exception. His own extensive knowledge combined with an artistic temperament may sometimes have led him to overestimate the intellectual level (and sense of humour) of some of his interviewers. He found it difficult to realise that not all the correspondents writing about Indonesia could at once grasp the difference between Toradja's, Bataks and Dajaks, or between Buddhism and Brahminism. Discussing the present problems, he talked of the struggle between Good and Evil in the dramas of the *Wajang Koelit* (the Javanese shadow play), drawing his similes from Javanese mythology, where again all were not so much at home as himself.

Dr. van Mook, whose integrity and strong character everyone in time came to respect, remained for a long period almost invisible. Later he received the press once a week in the palace, and gradually the conferences became less formal; we were allowed to smoke and no longer had to sit solemnly at a long conference table. But even then there was very little intimate contact. As a Dutchman, I realised only too well that our Lieutenant-Governor-General must be feeling bitter at the flood of biased reports which came under his eye; moreover, he was overwhelmed with work and found it difficult to make time for press interviews. But I was very glad that at last they took place regularly, for the two or three correspondents who were well-disposed towards us had long been clamouring for a clearly defined declaration of Dutch policy to counterbalance the statement of principles already published by the Republicans, and Dr. van Mook said much that was enlightening and constructive. Above all, by his directness, his ready rejoinders and somewhat acid humour, he won the sympathy of those who hitherto had insisted on regarding him merely as a stern, reactionary

official, the embodiment of Dutch "colonial despotism".

I heard one correspondent remark as we were leaving one day: "He is quite human"—something he had obviously not expected.

Of course, there was something to be said for it that our government in Batavia refrained from trying to imitate the style of the Indonesian Information Bureau and retained its characteristic northern reserve. But this reticence, which was probably carried too far, particularly at the outset, resulted in reports that were one-sided and injurious to us; and misunderstandings, once they have arisen, are hard to live down.

We had free access to Mohamad Hatta, Sjarifoedin and their colleagues of the still unrecognised Indonesian Republic, and even the great man Soekarno himself was not unapproachable. If the gentlemen were sometimes not at home, we were informed of this by the *pemoeda* on guard at the door, or, more often, by a house-boy, and a reason was given. Sjarifoedin, then Minister of Information and Foreign Affairs, once carried informality so far as to receive us in pyjamas, making himself comfortable by drawing one of his feet up on to the seat of the chair in Javanese fashion. Nor shall I easily forget sitting with another journalist in the open veranda of Sjahrir's modest dwelling waiting for the news to come through of his nomination as premier of the new Indonesian state. Wearing a white, open coat, he was sitting in an easy chair, his little adopted son on his knee and hiding his suspense under jocularly. Later that evening Soekarno sent a car to fetch him (Sjahrir had not one of his own), and the newly-elected premier drove away to the stately president's house in Pegangsaan-Oost. An hour later we saw him in his new dignity, which at that moment only seemed to make him boyishly happy. In due course it was to weigh heavily on him; when I saw him on another occasion I could plainly see the marks of worry and sleepless nights.

Our Dutch Information Service tried afterwards to make up for its original failures by arranging interviews, instructive film-shows and even social gatherings with dancing, and to which one was invited to bring a lady.

It seemed a good thing to create personal contacts between the correspondents in this way, for in the midst of political crisis, with passions flaring up on all sides, the spirit of comrade-

ship was apt to go by the board; our corps tended to split into two groups, who regarded each other almost as enemies. The conflict even affected men who had little or no knowledge of the Indies and their history and had scarcely had time to get to know the Indonesians and Dutch at first hand. But they too probably looked on this Java as an arena where two ideologies were struggling for supremacy; in any case, their bitterness at these times was quite genuine and gave rise to a kind of clan feeling; the like-minded were even reported to have gone so far as to share their scoops! Indeed, the mutual mistrust on one occasion led to an openly expressed suspicion that among the journalists whose sympathies were with the Republic there was someone who, on the quiet, was passing on the military secrets of the Allies (in so far as the press conference at headquarters disclosed them to us) to the "enemy"—a Soekarno spy, in fact!

Yet another rather amusing example of this mistrust remains in my memory. My car (a Pontiac, used by the Japanese during the occupation and repaired with the aid of various bits of string and wire, since spare parts were not obtainable from America) had once again broken down in the road, and I asked an Australian correspondent whether he would order his driver to take me to the office in his car; it was one o'clock in the afternoon and the tropical sun was blazing down on the pavement. "In that case I'd better come along with you as well," he said hesitantly. And when I looked at him without understanding, he added: "My chauffeur is an Indonesian . . ."

I had already seen for myself that the chauffeur was an Indonesian, but it had not occurred to me that he and I were not to be trusted alone in the same car. I reassured my colleague, who had only recently arrived from Australia, saying that I spoke the man's language and had no fear of being murdered by him, and that I, on my side, was quite prepared to promise not to try on any colonial despotism with him on the way.

No doubt, the Australian meant no harm, and I can laugh at the incident in retrospect. But I really believe that, at the time, I was childish enough to feel offended.

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The friendly intercourse between brown and white which was

still observable everywhere in the town must have come somewhat as an anticlimax to the foreigner arriving in Batavia with the fixed idea that every Indonesian was only awaiting the opportunity to make an attempt on the life of any Dutchman who came his way. The first short chat I had with our hotel-boy Simin was sufficient to reassure me that the mass of the people hated us no more than in the past, and during the early weeks of my stay I could still drive (with a couple of ex-camp inhabitants) without concern and without protection to Bandung, over the Puntjak Pass, and back by Sukabumi. Somewhere in a little village near Tjandjoer, later to become a notorious *pemoeda* centre, we sprang a puncture, and in the hot sunlight were fixing the jack under the back wheel when interested voices asked: "*Apa ada koerang, toewan?*—What's the matter, sir?" and soon gratuitous help was being offered on all sides, accompanied by comments on the present unrest: "What's all the fuss about nowadays, sir; when are things going to be all right again? We have no clothes, nothing, nothing, nothing, and money's worth no more than a scrap of paper."

A week later it was impossible to make this same journey without risking one's life. The *pemoedas* had taken things in hand meanwhile, distributed red-and-white flags and decreed race-hatred against the whites. They themselves set a good example, and woe betide him who dared to fall short!

A high government official in Batavia told me that, at the beginning of September, he had left his internment camp in the interior and had driven in a car through his previous residency. The people streamed out to cheer their old "*toewan Residèn*", who, even in his camp rags, symbolised for them the memory of order, right, justice and what now seemed prosperity. If, at the end of that very same month, he had ventured to take such a drive, the *pemoedas* would have arrested him and imprisoned him, if not worse, and the people would have looked on without raising a hand in defence of their "*toewan Residèn*".

Not very heroic behaviour, possibly, but the *pemoedas* were armed and had learnt their methods of intimidation from the Japanese, and the Javanese people, only too easily impressed by a show of force, had learnt during those four years of the occupation that it was better not to interfere with anything they saw going on. . . .

I can understand that the young Javanese intellectual should not like us; there is much that must wound his pride—the very thought, for example, that our help was indispensable in bringing his country to prosperity. Furthermore, I am aware that a revolution, born in the heads and hearts of a small group of intellectuals, can, nonetheless, be a necessity even for a nation living in contentment. All I am concerned with here is to correct the widespread error that the people of Java hate us. If this were the case, it would present a more serious indictment of our régime than the unbridled insurrection of a Japanese-trained army of boys between fifteen and twenty. So it is with a sense of relief that I refute the charge.

Anyone who happened to be in Java in the autumn of 1945 had ample opportunity to see for himself. The population as a whole thought regretfully of the days of the white administration, not because they had affectionate memories of every Dutchman, but because in those days there had been peace in the land; because the roads were safe; because a man could go out to plough his rice-field without fearing that his buffalo would be seized and led away by half-grown boys in the name of the Republic; because you could buy all the food and clothing you wanted in the markets and dispose of your own wares for a good price. "*Tempo doeloe*" meant for the people "the good old days", and time and again I have heard the man in the street utter the pious wish: "If only *tempo doeloe* could come back again."

Of course, *tempo doeloe* can never actually return. Of course, this nation, as much as any other nation, has the right to govern itself; the colonial epoch, and the spirit which gave birth to it, lies behind us for ever. But must this revolution, whose inevitability the Dutch themselves realise and realised long before the war—must it necessarily come to pass at the cost of Java's whole economic prosperity? At the cost of a bloody Terror involving Indonesians, Chinese, Eurasians and defenceless Dutch women and children, of whom there are still—more than a year later—tens of thousands imprisoned in camps in the interior as hostages of an opponent devoid of magnanimity?

Can there be any doubt that the Indonesian nation must first be educated for the enormous task of ruling this great country in such a way that the outcome may not be a disaster, the

victims of which will be the millions of already half-starved people? Cannot Indonesians and Dutch come together and reach a compromise, binding both parties together in gratitude and holding out rich promise for the future? Those of us who have, with our own eyes, seen Java's rise to prosperity; the many, who love the Indies as a second fatherland, still have hope. But the time will be long, and much will have to be suffered meanwhile.



By degrees British troops were brought in, and the Japanese sentinels gave place to British-Indian soldiers and Seaforth Highlanders. This Scottish regiment caused a great sensation among the crowds in the street when they piped their way along the Molenvliet to add their lustre to the ceremony of changing the guard at the Hotel des Indes. The billiard-room of the Harmonie had been turned into a canteen, and outside thronged Indonesian children, fruit-sellers and idle onlookers, who kept up a running conversation in a mixture of English and Malay with the newly arrived soldiers inside, and hoped for the gift of a cigarette. The fraternisation was spontaneous and universal. Young Scotsmen amused themselves—and the bystanders—by putting the bewildered owner of one of the *tiga-rodas* plying for hire in the passenger seat of his own vehicle and giving him a joy-ride. For the rest they tore about the town in their jeeps, usually giving a lift to half a dozen white children, eager for the ride and proud of their new friends, while their parents looked on smiling. The British soldiers were unaware of the emotion which such a sight can arouse in people who have become unaccustomed to friendliness from strangers.

When the Dutch colours were hoisted outside Allied headquarters, flanked by the English and American flags, the news spread like wildfire through the camps, and many people, who had never suspected themselves of such ultra-patriotic sentiments, took a long walk in the midday sun in order to rid themselves, by the sight of the festive red-white-and-blue, of the national inferiority complex engendered by life in a prison camp. Their hungry souls gained satisfaction from the fact that our piece of bunting had the place of honour between the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes, rising slightly above them. They

were grateful to the English C.O. for this courteous gesture, which could hardly have escaped the notice of the native population, with their natural susceptibility to such things. Current gossip, which had seemed to imply that the mighty John Bull would no longer pay any serious attention to a Holland which had been trampled underfoot by Germans and Japanese, was thus given the lie in no uncertain manner.

Shortly afterwards, however, the English were to adopt a policy, which came as a great shock to the Dutch and gave rise to bitter feelings, and I saw no hopes of these coming to an end during my visit.

Our men and women in the camps had seen Soekarno's young disciples (still at that time known as "*Hei-Ho's*" and "*Soekarella's*") waving little Japanese flags, and, indeed, had seen them act as assistant warders and voluntary nigger-drivers in the enemy's service—little sadists in embryo. It was taken for granted that the Allies, who had been able to conquer the mechanised armies of Fascist Germany, Japan and Italy, would be able to deal with this handful of adolescent pocket-fascists. Nor was there a moment's doubt that Soekarno, notorious for his anti-Allied agitation, his telegrams of congratulation to collaborationists in the Philippines and in Burma, his famous slogan, "*Amerika kita strika, Inggris kita linggis*" (we will iron America flat, we will crush England with a crowbar), would, on the arrival of the Allies, be immediately arrested. When it was heard that, on the contrary, English Supreme Command had sent Lieutenant-Colonel Vanderpost as an envoy of peace to the President appointed by the Japanese of a Republic instituted by the Japanese, to ask for his co-operation in the maintenance of peace and order—the news was received with stupefaction. The only explanation could be that it was a misunderstanding; obviously the English had not been fully informed of the facts! But that, again, when you came to think of it, seemed hardly possible, for Vanderpost (an Englishman) was himself newly released from Japanese imprisonment in Java!

I think he had been in one of the Batavian camps; his face, with its typical "camp-complexion", still showed the marks of deprivation and suffering. And with quiet Anglo-Saxon irony, hidden beneath a gentle, rather weary smile, he related in the course of a press conference, how, somewhat to his astonish-

ment, he had met in Soekarno's forecourt a number of charming Javanese ladies—a delightful reception committee, ordained, with the help of coffee and light refreshments, to humour him and prejudice him in favour of the Republic.

The English had come to Java with the express task of disarming the Japanese and securing the safety of the civilian population. Had they been in their own Empire, it can hardly be doubted that they would not have left a Soekarno at large; but they were reluctant to interfere in our domestic affairs, and they thought they could best contribute to general peace and order by observing strict neutrality in the conflict which was developing before their eyes. They were responsible for the safety of white women and children in distant camps, and they had no idea what might be the repercussions of provisional action against Soekarno in the capital. Add to this that their military position was still exceedingly precarious and, moreover, they were very unwilling to sacrifice British lives in an affair which, in their opinion, was entirely the business of Holland.

In short, the English did take Soekarno and his *Soekarellas* seriously, whereas the Dutch in Java did not.

Meanwhile, it was not difficult to foresee what effect the report of this polite English visit to "the Leader" must have throughout the country. Thousands of *Soekarellas*, who, fearing chastisement from the Allies, had gone into hiding, came out boldly from their places of concealment like the birds and beasts of the field after a storm. And many Dutch families became their victims. While it had been "safe" they had trustfully returned to their former homes in Malang, Madioen, Djocjakarta—with the result that now they were completely defenceless and at the mercy of the gangs of *pemoedas* who were wantonly devastating the country.

Soekarno and his cabinet could do nothing to remedy this, and so the unfortunate situation arose in which the conquered Japanese, who were waiting to be disarmed, had to be reminded of their responsibility of maintaining law and order in towns like Bandung, Buitenzorg, and Samarang—a state of affairs, which with every week that it persisted became more humiliating for the conqueror and inevitably led to the accusation that the Allies were using their former enemies for aggressive purposes and thus betraying the Indonesian people. No less con-

vinced that they were being betrayed were the Dutch in Java, particularly when the English—still hoping to be able to restore order by observing strict neutrality—opposed the use of Dutch troops.

Our men, who knew that their women and children were exposed to danger in the outlying districts, were frantic, and during that period I frequently heard references to “perfidious Albion”. It was only to be expected that the English, on their side, were provoked by the sharp criticisms levelled at such a “liberation”. High Command complained that they had been completely misinformed by the Dutch regarding the situation in Java; that the seriousness of the position had been kept from them in the hope that they could be used as cat’s paws. Possibly this had been thoughtlessness, or, at the best, ignorance—but ignorance was no excuse for a government; we should have seen to it that our Intelligence functioned properly.

Thus the Japanese time-bomb was effective beyond all expectation and, indeed, in an unforeseen direction.

The English Tommies, with their long years’ experience of war, accused our soldiers of being “trigger-happy”. And when I saw our men, pale and thin, their rifles at the ready, driving by in cars, I was overwhelmed with a fear that this reproach might be not altogether unfounded. The men themselves had no conception of the dangerous state of excitement they were in. The sufferings they had been through in the prison camps still glowed in their eyes. For years they had had to swallow humiliations; they had been beaten, down-trodden, starved and had been unable to defend themselves. Now they had a rifle in their hands; this weapon symbolised power, authority. And they had an account to settle. First of all with the Japs, and then with the Indonesian ruffians who, by the grace of the Jap, had been permitted to ill-treat and spit upon them. They knew, too, what their wives had had to suffer from the *Soekarellas*, wives who, in many cases, they had not yet been able to see because they were still in inaccessible camps at the mercy of the Nationalists. The Japs were subjugated now; it was almost amusing to see the way, even before they were told, they gave themselves up as prisoners in camps built by themselves and made comfortable with stolen furniture. But the *Soekarellas* were still strutting about with their chests thrown out—they

even drove about in cars, bearing arms, after having volunteered with the English as auxiliary police. Auxiliary police! Fine fellows they were for maintaining order—for instance, by taking an active part in looting and terrorising the markets, so that, if you were thirsty, you couldn't even buy a mango.

In such circumstances, it was not difficult to understand how easy it was for a gun to go off.

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In the past our fierce Amboynese soldiers had always looked down on the "weak and cowardly" Javanese. Now their fanatical loyalty to the Dutch flag had made them the chief object of the *pemoedas*' hatred. Again and again their wives were ill-treated and murdered, and the Amboynese could not wait for the English to intervene. Asiatics themselves, they had their own notion of how action should be taken against Asiatics. Terrorism must be answered with terrorism. On one occasion they attacked a police-station and took all the personnel "prisoner". Another time they rolled a barrel of petrol into a Batavian *kampung* and set fire to it; the whole sky east of the Koningsplein was black with the smoke.

The English protested against such radical methods and threatened to send all the Amboynese away unless they were prepared to subject themselves to military discipline. But the time was to come when even the English military authorities would lose patience with the *pemoedas*.

* * *

Driving through Batavia one day in a lorry with a party of Amboynese, I was able to see with my own eyes that they had no friends among the population. Everywhere I saw averted faces, black looks. The men in uniform paid no attention to this. They laughed and joked, only waiting for a shot from the other side (shooting had already become a daily pastime in Batavia) to leap out of the lorry and come to grips with their assailants. However, the *pemoedas*, knowing their Amboynese, refrained from such attacks in broad daylight, and preferred white victims for their sniping.

The men in the lorry were reinforcements for the Dutch outpost at Kebajoran where, on the previous day, there had been heavy fighting. Kebajoran lies just south-west of Batavia on the railway line to Rangkasbitoeng in the Bantam residency, which has always had the reputation of being a stronghold of brigandism. Apart from professional criminals, a whole army of unfortunates whom poverty and distress had turned into desperadoes, tried to make their way into Batavia, attracted by the stories of shops and warehouses stacked full of goods. So the railway had to be guarded; trains were searched for arms and for ragged passengers who could produce no satisfactory reason for their journey to the capital. The camp at Kebajoran became a lion in the path, for which from time to time it had to pay heavily; at a later date it even came under mortar-fire; that was after the Republican army had taken up the cause of these fighters for freedom from Bantam. The inhabitants of the neighbouring village, who supplied our soldiers with fresh fruit and vegetables, found themselves in a far from enviable position; their situation so near to this centre of activity laid them open to preliminary skirmishes on the part of the assailants, who cooled their wrath on them in the first place, announcing their approach in an ominous way by setting fire to isolated houses.

After we had left the town, all conversation in the lorry ceased. Dark eyes kept a sharp look-out. As we approached Kebajoran we saw the casualties of the previous day still lying along the roadside, half immersed in the flooded rice-fields.

Here my Amboynese did receive an ovation—somewhat macabre, perhaps, coming as it did from a group of villagers who, in the bright morning sunshine, were busy dragging the corpses out of their fields and burying them along the outskirts of the forest. Their own safety depended on the strength of the Dutch camp.

What might their fate be if the authorities in Batavia should decide to withdraw this military outpost?

In the camp I was given particulars of the attack. About two hundred and fifty *pemoedas*, clothed in a motley assortment of Japanese and Dutch uniforms and armed with carbines and a few Japanese machine-guns (left behind after their flight), had jumped out of the train about half an hour's journey away and

marched on the outpost in two columns. Some refugees had given timely warning in the camp, so that they were prepared. The battle did not last long.

While this story was being related to me, the C.O., wet with perspiration, returned from patrol duty, accompanied by a small party of men. Lunch was served, rice with chicken and spicy tit-bits, and the men fell upon it hungrily. No one spoke much; they were too exhausted. I was shown some dum-dum bullets which had been found on the enemy the previous day. The bullet is reversed in the case, so that the steel covering is turned inwards and the soft lead is in front. The method is simple enough; the effect is ghastly.

The encampment was ringed in by barbed wire, and at intervals a sentry was on guard, his eyes fixed steadily on the surrounding undergrowth and not to be deflected from his silent look-out by any question directed to him by to-day's visitor from the town, not yet under the spell of a perpetually menacing danger. Every man in the camp knew how easy it was for an enemy, operating single-handed, to approach within a hundred yards, take aim carefully from behind a tree and after a hit or miss shot disappear again long before a patrol could turn out. Such incidents were daily occurrences, and the sentries were the chosen targets. It was, therefore, absolutely essential to keep a sharp look-out, until their eyes ached with the glaring sunlight.

At dusk the danger increased a hundredfold. The sudden barking of a village dog might only mean a harmless passer-by, or it might signify the stealthy approach of a superior force. A single assailant, with some luck and courage, could, on a moonless night, creep up within easy reach and then strike his blow with one of the old weapons restored to service, which are not so noisy as those used by the whites, but are none the less effective. . . .

The nights in that outlying station were certainly a strain on the nerves, even if you were stretched in your bunk trusting to the watchfulness of the sentries. But the men found more peace of mind here than in the town. Unlike their comrades out yonder, they were at least allowed to fight. An engagement did not frighten them; they felt, after it was over, a sense of relief and were able to snatch a few hours' peaceful sleep.

Two or three weeks later, in Batavia, I saw another Dutch contingent waiting to move out to Kebajoran, and as there had been a renewal of activity around the camp recently, I decided to go in and ask if I could accompany the men and spend a night there. But the Dutch colonel, whom I consulted, dared not give permission without first informing the general, and the general, it seemed, was not available just then. So I had to watch the contingent drive off; my suggestion that I might drive with them in my own car, on my own responsibility, was equally turned down. The refusal was not prompted so much by concern for my life as by deep-rooted mistrust of the press, who poked their noses into everything and sometimes wrote very unpleasant articles. This uneasiness was only human and quite understandable, but the secretiveness of our military authorities often led the foreign correspondents to suspect that we had something to hide.

With the English authorities I was never frustrated in matters of this kind, and I have often been on night patrol with the Seaforth Highlanders in the most notorious quarters of Batavia's slums, with no more cautionary advice than: "See you don't get holes in you."

My relations with this Scottish regiment, which gradually became very friendly, I owed to a young room-mate, Captain Hugh Charteris of the Scottish guards. He had been badly wounded—at Cassino, I think—mentioned for his courage and afterwards attached to Public Relations as liaison officer. Whether he was as successful in this capacity as with his troops I don't know, but I venture to doubt it, for he was still young and impetuous and he was always ready to leave his desk in the office and go off where there was fighting afoot. These night patrols were something after his own heart, and with the tireless energy of his twenty-three years he was rather amused at my wistful plea that I should like to have a quiet night's sleep for once. There was truth in his retort that this had no chance of being anything but a pious wish, for, even in the centre of the town, there was scarcely a night without some sort of disturbance. The streets at the back of the Hotel des Indes were a favourite arena for shooting affrays, probably because of the Amboynese barracks in the lane bearing the picturesque name of "*Djaga Monjet*" (the Monkeys' Look-Out).

The first Company of the Seaforth Highlanders was housed in the *Factorij* (the Dutch Trading Company), which with its stout walls and heavily barred lower windows constituted a sort of fortress. It was from this building that the patrols went out—two or three lorries under the command of a lieutenant. The normal round was to visit the posts which were distributed over the less savoury down-town districts, such as Djembatan Lima, Kalimati, Pasarpisang and Malaka. I shall not easily forget those slow journeys through the dim streets of Old Batavia. Everything was still as death and forsaken; save for a few roaming cats and a stray goat, the town seemed to be without life. But we knew we were being watched through the cracks of closed shutters; every dark garden behind the undulating line of a Chinese wall held a menace.

When later the *pemoedas* discovered that home-made hand-grenades were an effective weapon against military lorries, these night patrols became rather risky expeditions; at the outset we did not yet have to reckon with an opponent with such up-to-date equipment. But the knowledge of hidden danger was not without its effect on us even then. The sentries at their posts, too, were relieved to see us, though they tried not to let this be apparent in their voices. Our visit might not be a very long one, but it made a break in the long hours of loneliness. The lieutenant made himself known to Private Williams, who pointed his gun at us until he was sure that the men behind the dazzling headlights were friends and not extremists.

"Everything okay there, I suppose?"

"Thanks, sir, fine."

"All right, we'll go on."

"Sweet dreams," called out a soldier from the back of the lorry, and Private Williams in reply consigned him to an even hotter place than Old Batavia.

After the scattered British guards at Surabaya had been taken by surprise and massacred by the mob, the posts in Batavia were concentrated in a few strong points—a measure which gave rise to great despondency among the Chinese owners of shops and warehouses. But I will return to that later. Among the many dangers to which a lonely sentry in Old Batavia was exposed ranked the temptations of Eve; this was particularly the case with the British-Indians. But after one young Scots-

man had been enticed by a woman to a nearby pub, robbed of his gun and "*tjintjanged*" (stabbed and cut into pieces), the sentries were thoroughly scared of any amorous invitation.

At the outset the patrols were kept busy rescuing Japs who had got into tight corners. The populace eagerly seized the opportunity to settle accounts with their former bullies whenever they got the chance, and here and there a group of partially disarmed soldiers of Dai Nippon were still living in school buildings or warehouses. Even if one were not *a priori* inclined to take pity on these rats caught in their own trap, humanity forbade that one should leave them to be brutally murdered.

As I did not want to be completely useless on these rounds, I had volunteered to act as a Malay interpreter, trying to teach the Tommies that they were more likely to be successful in rounding up fugitive looters if they shouted "*Brenti!*" or "*Mari Sini!*" rather than "Come 'ere, you son of a bitch!" I had not, however, foreseen that I should have to act as intermediary between Scotsmen and Japs speaking broken Malay. One evening a report came in that a Japanese sergeant and two dozen men were surrounded by a huge mob, and as I happened to be in the *Factorij*, out of curiosity I went along too.

The jubilant crowd made room for our lorries without demur; the impression I got was more of a jolly brawl than a dangerous thirst for blood—which by no means implies that the Japs would have escaped with their lives if they had ventured outside the building in which they had entrenched themselves. The little Japanese sentry at the entrance realised this only too well and rushed up thankfully to unbolt the iron gate for these welcome visitors. He would have locked it behind us immediately, but this was unnecessary, since our own troops jumped out of their lorries and took over the guard. We walked in and found the rest of the besieged Japs quite cheerful and obviously surprised at our arrival. Since it was a very hot night and rather late, most of them were walking about only half clothed, their brawny chests naked, the braces of their trousers flapping round their fat, dirty ankles.

The sergeant buttoned up his jacket, pulled his cap on over his sleek, black hair and gave us a military salute.

"Ask him when it all started," the Scottish lieutenant said to me.

"Ini kapan moelai?"

The sergeant looked all round before he could remember. "This afternoon they began shouting, and they threw stones. Later on more came along."

"Hell, I don't believe they want help at all," said the lieutenant. "Ask him if he's got the wind up."

"Ada takoet?"

"Tida, toewan!" the sergeant protested. "I don't suppose they'll come in. They can go on shouting out there as much as they like."

The stupid Asiatic peasants grinned all over their dirty faces, coming close up and looking us up and down inquisitively and impertinently.

"Happy innocence," said the lieutenant. "Just for the fun of it, ask them what arms they've still got."

I did this, and the sergeant began to calculate.

"The sentry at the gate has a gun." We had seen that for ourselves. "And we've got three revolvers and *this*." He pointed to his sword, and his companions produced a few more, which had been hanging on a rack against the wall or lying on the table.

Now that the reason of our visit had begun to sink in, they did their best to reassure us; they seemed to be moved by our surprising anxiety for their welfare, and talked to each other about it in their own language.

Apparently they had feared we were come to arrest and imprison them and were relieved that they could stay where they were. They still had enough rice, water and charcoal to last them for a week. "Just look," they said, showing us a sack of rice, still half full, standing in a corner. It was plain to see that the popular rising outside could not interfere with their happiness; they trusted to their one gun, their three revolvers and the half-dozen sharp Japanese swords.

They did, however, seem rather put out when, led by the lieutenant, we went to have a look at an adjoining room. Somewhat confused, they followed us with their eyes. What secrets had they hidden in this little ante-room? We had certainly not expected to find a boudoir, yet a mirror, a table with a few feminine fal-lals and a chair with a gay silk jacket hanging over it aroused our suspicions. Against the wall stood a bed, and on

the bed, peacefully sleeping, lay—to put it mildly—a lightly clad young Malay woman.

The Scottish lieutenant was the first of us to remember he was a gentleman. He retreated from the ante-room and made no comment on the incident beyond saying:

“So they think they can hold out here?”

I put the question to the sergeant. He was obviously relieved and had the boldness to suggest: “Perhaps the honourable lieutenant would tell the people to go home?”

When we got outside we made an attempt in this direction and, indeed, the excitement of the crowd seemed to have abated in some degree. A later patrol reported that all was quiet again.

“Queer chaps, aren’t they?” the lieutenant said, half to himself. I suppose he was referring to the Japanese.

What most intrigued me myself was the peaceful sleep of the young woman. Did she rely so completely on the fighting prowess of her *garde d’honneur*? Or did she derive this deep sense of security from the red-and-white badge which I had seen adorning the gay yellow silk jacket hanging on the chair?

Was her relationship with the Japanese enemy tolerated by the mob on condition that she acknowledged her adherence to the Republic?



There were other cases where the Japs did not come off so well and had to be rescued from a ticklish position. On one of these occasions Lieutenant Young, with whom I went out several times, received a nasty gash in his arm. A Japanese corporal, who had been driven from his post by a menacing crowd, had managed under cover of the dark to hide himself in a hole and probably did not know that help was at hand; in his excitement he mistook Young for an Indonesian and lunged out at the unsuspecting Scotsman. This officer, having already had some experience of the Japs in Burma, had rather a poor opinion of them, and it annoyed him to have his errand of mercy rewarded in this way. With his still serviceable left arm he wrenched the sword from his assailant; the Jap, realising his mistake, ducked just in time, and the sword, whizzing over

his head, struck a tree with such force that it snapped in two. That closed the incident, but Young treasured the trophy won in such an unexpected way; henceforward he carried the hilt with its broken-off blade slung over his shoulder on a strap. I heard by chance one day from a captured looter the nickname which the people had given him on account of this peculiarity: "*Inggris stenga pedang*—The Englishman with half a sword." His wounded right arm, which he now carried in a sling, did not prevent him from going on patrols and continuing to be foremost in every adventure.

During this period the company assembled a fine collection of Japanese swords, which they intended to take home as souvenirs. Very soon weapons of every variety were added. Besides revolvers and carbines, there were old-fashioned muzzle-loaders, *soempitans* (blow-pipes with poisoned darts) bamboo spears, the points of which had been hardened simply by holding them in the fire, bush-knives, daggers and swords under various names such as *parangs*, *klewangs*, *goloks* and *krisses*; the latter were occasionally wound round with a piece of white cloth, for, in the meantime, Djocjakarta had declared the Holy War on us (on the wireless, which certainly might be deemed a novelty in the annals of the holy wars against the infidels), and white is the colour in which one consecrates oneself to death and which ensures immediate entry into paradise.

On the other hand, white being a colour which is rather conspicuous in the dark, the *pemoedas* who manned the barricades in Old Batavia at night, preferred to wear black—it was then an easy matter to glide away unnoticed in the shadow along the houses. I was never able to discover whether this was at the same time the party uniform of the "*Banteng Hitam*", the Black Buffalo, which (like the *Banteng Merah*, the Red Buffalo) had been resuscitated out of the dim past in imitation of the Japanese ultra-nationalist societies, such as "The Black Dragon" and "The Black Fan".

These barricades looked more dangerous than they usually turned out to be. It was claimed that they had been set up to protect peacefully-sleeping Indonesians from surprise attacks by blood-thirsty Dutch, Eurasian and Amboynese, but the striking thing about them was that, almost without exception, they were to be encountered along the routes which the night

patrols had to take. It was not a difficult matter to remove them, for they consisted, for the most part, merely of a couple of bullock-carts drawn across the road and a few rickety bits of furniture. Nevertheless they had to be approached with the prescribed military caution and could hold up a patrol long enough to give the looters, feverishly running hither and thither in the next block, time to find a way of escape with their plunder.

You had only to meet with three or four of such barricades no more than a hundred feet apart, and you would be pretty sure to find a warehouse ransacked and the looters gone.

When the British soldiers appeared on the scene, a few black-garbed figures would steal away at the last moment, having probably intended originally to face the danger. One of them might, however, make a valiant stand at the barricades and cheerfully submit to being disarmed, a certain amount of pride in his countenance to think that the mighty British Army considered him dangerous enough to take away his spear and his bush-knife. Later on he would be able to boast to his comrades—You cowards, you, look at me! It wouldn't take him long to cut a new spear, it might even be possible to come by a *golok*. Not a trace of rancour; the disarmed man would most obligingly help to clear away the barricade. The looters had long since received the warning that the *Inggris* were coming, and he knew he would not be deprived of his fair share.

At one barricade where five or six of these youths were waiting for us, Young happened to catch sight of a *pemoeda* who had concealed himself in a pile of wood. When he felt a tap on his shoulder he emerged from his hiding-place in a state of terror, his teeth chattering so much that he could scarcely speak.

"Ask him what he was up to there?" said Young.

"*Bekin apa di-sini, toewan lètnan soeka tahoe?*"

"*Saja djaga, toewan . . . I am on sentry duty, sir.*"

"But how could you see anything tucked away in all that wood?"

His companions thought this a great joke. He himself merely stared at us, looking very confused. As we drove off the whole party cried out after us in their newly-acquired English—"Good-bye!"

*

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*

Only looters caught in the very act were arrested; the *pemoedas* at the barricades were allowed to go, although the bearing of arms was forbidden by martial law. But where could one have housed such a number of prisoners? And what can you reckon as arms in Java? Every Javanese carries a knife in his belt, it is an essential in his daily life. Without a knife how could he cut wood for the kitchen or for his fence; how could he break open a coconut? Of course, it is just as easy to use it to break open a skull as a coconut; and a bamboo spear can be something more than a child's toy, as may be seen by the gaping wounds that are made with it. . . .

The simple Scottish boys, with whom I often talked, regarded this whole conflict in Java as a joke at first; it seemed to them no more than a parody of the real war in which they had taken part in Burma and elsewhere. They looked upon these Indonesians as great children and thought the Dutch must have been hard-hearted tyrants to cause so unwarlike a people to break out in revolt. Later on they were horrified at the cruelties they saw perpetrated by these self-same Indonesians; they began to hate them and mistrusted them to a man. Then it was my turn to try to convince them of the basic gentleness of the Javanese people, who, however, are so easy to incite to fanaticism and in whom, as with all great children, beneath the surface lies a slumbering beast.

* * *

Instead of abating, the looting was all the time on the increase, having become a regular nightly revel. Not only from Bantam, but also from the Krawang residency and other districts, the scum of an impoverished and demoralised Java came streaming into the town and infected by its example the portion of the population which still remained honest. Never before had crime gone unpunished as now, and even after three and a half years of Japanese occupation the warehouses proved still to be packed with treasures.

None of these recent immigrants had a roof over his head, and they all slept in the open air (the West-monsoon with its heavy rain had not yet broken). In the station square opposite the *Factorij*, where the Scots were housed, hundreds camped out,

probably under the pretext of waiting for an early morning train. In any case, in choosing this spot, they showed plainly their trust in British protection; at the same time they could keep an eye on the comings and goings of the patrols. . . . With Eastern fatalism, they lay stretched out in the middle of the street, forming a living barrier, as Charteris and I could see by the light of our head-lamps when we set out for our regular visit to the Seaforths. Fortunately, we were prepared for it.

The English were novices at this police-work in a country they were seeing for the first time and whose language they could not speak. Gradually they learnt to know the ropes and later on they were reinforced with soldiers from the former Dutch-Indian Army; but in the beginning the looters had a very good time. The Indonesian police force (thoroughly purged by the Japanese with a view to their Greater Asia project) in theory gave its assistance in rounding-up the plunderers. But it was only in theory. Sometimes, however, the Scots forced the local Commissioner of Police and his staff to accompany them on a patrol, so that these gentlemen might see with their own eyes what was going on all over the town every night, while they remained peacefully in their station at Glodok.

The Chinese merchants, who had every reason for uneasiness, all appealed to the English, each one seeking special protection for himself. Every now and again one of them would come into the *Factorij*, his face radiating amiability, and bearing, according to the old recipe, presents for the officers' mess—fruit, eggs, beer. These gifts, of course, were only in token of his gratitude for the greater security (*sic*) which now prevailed in Old Batavia; naturally he was not hoping for any personal favour. But he *could* give some good advice, if the major was prepared to listen to him. Look, he had brought with him a plan of the Klenteng district, and his advice to the major was to put a sentry at that corner (a long-nailed index finger indicated the corner) from which vantage point he would be able to keep a look-out on three, even four, streets at the same time.

The major winked at us, looked attentively at the plan, had the whole idea explained to him once more, and then asked: "And now would you mind telling me where *your* shop is?"

The Chinaman, with a disarming smile, pointed it out on the plan. His business premises, it seemed, happened to be at the

exact spot where, for strategical reasons, he considered a sentry should be posted. He sighed deeply when he found that his good advice was not going to be followed. . . .

Since it was impossible to be everywhere at the same time, and since it was essential that these nightly orgies of plundering should be put a stop to, the English authorities announced to the people that there were booby-traps in the warehouses and that everyone who went in was, therefore, running into the arms of death.

The looters thought that spontaneously exploding infernal machines of this kind would necessarily be placed, if, indeed, they were there at all, in the entry, so henceforward they avoided the doors and knocked holes in the walls.

No explosions. So it was all moonshine again, and they were too tough to let themselves be intimidated by scare-mongering. Under the Japanese régime they might have thought twice about it, but the Japs, of course, would not have been such idiots as to announce such a thing in advance. What fools these English were!

* * *

If you wanted to find out whose premises had been plundered on the previous night, all you had to do was to go to the various markets in the morning; there you would see the goods frankly displayed. You could even buy the printed notepaper of the unfortunate firm. Indeed, to my shame, I have to admit that for quite a time my wife was receiving letters from me written on the note-heading of a once famous Dutch Steamship Company, the K.P.M., familiar to all travellers in the East Indies. I had bought the paper, with envelopes to match, for a not too outrageous price in the "atom market", which extended the whole length of Noordwijk.

It may be wondered why this market was called the atom market. It seems that during the allied air-raids, in the last stage of the Japanese occupation, looting had already begun on a pretty large scale, and the goods that the plunderers carried off from the burning dock-sheds and warehouses were sold in the bomb market. Later, Java heard the news of the atom bomb. The idea of a simple bombardment was now out-of-date, and in honour of the instrument of victory, the market was given the new glamour name. . . .

Sometimes the English military police paid a surprise visit to this market in particular, and the sudden haste with which the stall-holders packed up their wares and tried to carry them off to safety was an ironical drama not without its amusing side. At the end of the market where the raid began there was no time to carry out this manoeuvre of escape, and the wares remained spread out, while the vendor squatted behind them, a fat betel-wad in his cheek, looking a bit green as the soldiers approached.

A lieutenant bends over the somewhat miscellaneous array and picks out some object.

"Let's have a look. What do I see stamped on these fine new knives and forks you have here? Sheffield! Did you order these from us, or how did you come by them?"

The question is translated, and it seems the owner can't remember how he came by them.

"I hope they weren't stolen?"

"Oh no, sir. . . !"

"Well then, where did you get them? Come along, out with it."

"*Tida tahoe, toewan*—I don't know, sir . . . they don't belong to me at all!"

This lucky and unexpected discovery throws a completely new light on the affair.

"Oh, so they aren't yours, eh?"

"*Tida, toewan!*" the man replies, understanding the question even in English.

"And who *do* they belong to, if they're not yours?"

He gazes around him with a vaguely questioning look. Maybe someone else happens to know who is the owner of these new knives and forks from Sheffield. No, no one has the slightest idea.

"So you'd like us to believe you were sitting here selling someone else's stuff?"

Another happy inspiration: "*Saja djaga, toewan* . . . I'm looking after them, sir."

"For the owner, you mean?"

"That's it, sir."

"And you say you don't know who the owner is?"

Helpless silence. The disinterested custodian stares up at his

interrogator, and with the back of his hand wipes away the betel-juice which is trickling from his mouth like blood.

Everyone waits anxiously to see what the *Inggris* will do.

"Very well, then. I think it will be safer for us to take the property away with us; otherwise it might disappear. When the owner comes back, just tell him that he can come and get from us anything that belongs to him. All he has to do is to come to the *Factorij*, in the Glodok district. Can you remember that?"

"Yes, sir!"

What a relief that this tedious cross-questioning is over at last. He and his companions are only too ready to help the soldiers load up. There's a lot of glass and you have to be careful with that. They are almost cheerful as they see the lorry drive away. Allah, we have had another lucky escape! Just think what would have happened under the Japanese! *Wah, tjlaka!* a beating—prison—or even your head off, perhaps, if the Jap happened to be in one of his moods again!

The sufferer is teased by his companions, who can scarcely credit their own luck. The lieutenant hadn't even looked at *their* goods. They only pick on one here and there! And the victims join in the laugh and cast a challenging look at the bystanders. Rather a pity—well, it can't be helped. After all they hadn't sunk much money in this stock—come to think of it, not so much as a cent! To-night there would be another looting party, and then for a change one can take one's stall to the south end of the market. The *Inggris* fellows think they are very clever!

* * *

No, the English could not possibly seize the whole market; they wouldn't have enough lorries to carry it all away; as it was, the *Factorij* was already piled high with confiscated goods. But gradually the Secret Service became more efficient, and sometimes one knew in the early evening that late that night so-and-so in such-and-such a district was to be robbed, so that a surprise raid could be organised.

Thus one evening Charteris and I had a sudden telephone call from Young; if we were prepared to rise from our beds at five

o'clock on the following morning, he might have something for us.

I was usually awake by that hour, having been roused by the impertinent cries of Jock, the great gibbon in the garden of the Hotel des Indes, and exactly at five o'clock we drove up to the post at Kalimati, where Young had told us to meet him. He was just on the point of setting off with twelve men, and we joined the party.

I remember feeling excited. I was anxious to experience every dramatic manifestation of this tragic conflict and should have considered myself a coward if I had evaded this going-into-action against plunderers. But I knew that a few days previously the English had come to a decision to take more stringent measures, and Young's invitation was connected with this new offensive. Was I in the next half hour going to have to look on while shots were fired at men who, in contravention of military orders, were trying to get away with their stolen goods?

To be quite honest, I was relieved to find that the looters' secret service seemed to function no less efficiently than our own. The warehouse whose turn it was that night was situated in the Buitengracht, and in the half dark, while we were creeping along the railway line towards the viaduct, we could just discern two brown fugitives, whom I suspected to be the last of a crowd which had already sought safety. They both jumped into the water and swam across to the other side, holding above their heads some light-coloured object, which was apparently more precious than their lives. At the improvised "entrance" to the building—a hole knocked in the brickwork—we found heaps of wrapping-paper, torn off in feverish haste to see what it contained. Inside it was pitch dark, but an electric torch disclosed a gay and luxurious chaos of silk material—a veritable Aladdin's cave. There was complete silence—that ghostly silence in which inanimate objects seem to come to life.

It was hardly to be imagined that the plunderers who had been disturbed at their orgy would fail to return to the treasure they had had to abandon. Sure enough, that same day, in the late evening, a telephone call from Young summoned us to the Old Town again. A sentry had been placed at the hole in the wall, but the looters had forced a way in on the other side, and shots had been fired. A lieutenant with some twelve

men was just setting off and, if we liked, we could go with them.

At the back of the building a rather excited Indian sentry was awaiting us, who explained in his best English that, after having challenged the plunderers without success, he had emptied his magazine; he had been afraid he might be attacked himself unless he fired the first shot. In the darkness it had been almost impossible to see anything, but he thought there must have been hundreds there. The sentry from the front had come to his assistance and he had fired too. They had heard cries and the splash of water; he was sure there must have been casualties, which in itself proved how many there had been, for he had only fired at random in the direction from which he heard whispering and the patter of naked feet.

Lighting our way with torches, we went out of the building to the waterside. Yellow palm-trunks gleamed through the darkness, throwing lively, swaying shadows. We kept as quiet as possible, so as to be able to hear any low call for help from a wounded man. On reaching the riverside we let the rays of our torches play over the misty water, and near the opposite bank we saw a dark body floating—a dead man. His head was submerged, and we should probably not have noticed him, if a piece of yellow silk half way down the bank had not drawn our eyes to the spot.

While we were making our way along the riverside to the viaduct, we found an unconscious figure lying among the reeds. We pulled him up on to the bank. He appeared to have been shot under the left shoulder, but the bullet had evidently not touched the heart. We had no stretcher with us, and the poor fellow, whom pain seemed to be rousing to semi-consciousness, had to be lifted under his armpits and by the ankles and carried to the lorry. The lieutenant asked me if I would take him to the police station at Glodok and see that he received medical attention. I nodded, took my place in the lorry, and we were off. The dripping brown body lay on a piece of sacking on the floor of the vehicle, and the Scottish soldier at the wheel drove as carefully as possible to avoid jolting him. No easy matter, since the surface of the road seemed to be nothing but a series of deep ruts.

The Indonesian police station at Glodok was not far, but it must have seemed quite far enough to the wounded man. The

sentry, who in the day-time stood outside the gate, had, as darkness came on, retired to a position inside, which ensured greater safety for himself, and from this vantage point he levelled his gun at us, looking somewhat sinister as he peeped over the low wall. I called out to him in Malay that this was a British lorry and that we should like to speak to the officer in charge.

The latter, an extremely young Indonesian superintendent, was seated in a leather arm-chair when I entered his office, and—to show what a man of the world he was—nonchalantly stretched out his arm towards a box of cigars. When he heard that I had brought him a wounded man who needed immediate medical attention, he left the box of cigars lying and followed me out of the room to the lorry, round which several constables were already gathered. In a weary voice, in which his sudden hatred of me could be plainly heard, he ordered them to carry the victim in.

"Can you get hold of a doctor?" I asked.

"Yes, yes, all in good time. I hope it will not be too late for him. He looks more dead than alive."

"All the more reason for getting a doctor at once."

"At once is impossible. To-morrow morning, at the earliest."

"Where is the doctor, then?"

"In the hospital. Where else should he be?"

"Can't you ring him up immediately?"

"Of course, why not? *Eh, telepon sama doktor, lekas!*" He issued the order to his constables more or less at large. And, seeing that I was waiting for the order to be carried out, he added: "But what's the use? I tell you he won't be able to come before to-morrow morning. The curfew has begun."

"Does it apply to doctors as well?"

"I don't know. But it's not safe in the streets; he certainly won't come."

"In that case this man must be taken to the hospital."

"Very good, that shall be done."

"At once."

"No, it can't be done to-night."

"Are your men afraid to go out in the streets, too?"

He gave me a furious look and said: "We haven't a car here."

"If you will tell me where the hospital is, I will take him there."

Faintly smiling, he rather reluctantly mentioned the hospital for Indonesians. It appeared it was right on the other side of the town, in the direction of Matraman. I hoped that the lieutenant would be able to manage without his lorry for so long and asked the superintendent to let me have one of his men as a guide. The request was granted and a boy in the uniform of a constable, carrying his carbine, nipped up in front beside us. We drove off.

It was a gloomy journey. The wounded man was now lying on a stretcher, since I had requisitioned one from some I had seen leaning against the wall in the police station, but, nonetheless, he must have felt the frightful jolting, and at intervals he would scream aloud with pain, so that the British sentries at the control points let us pass unchallenged. In order to avoid the worst holes, we sometimes lurched drunkenly from side to side of the road, which fortunately we had to ourselves. The young Scotsman at the wheel was much preoccupied by the suffering behind us, and he shook his head sorrowfully every time we had to crash through a hole.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian constable had explained to me exactly where the hospital was, and now he devoted himself entirely to his compatriot. He held his hand and comforted him with nationalist propaganda, probably intended more for my edification than for the consolation of the wounded man. I frequently heard the words "*merdeka*" (freedom) and "*Boeng Karno*" (Comrade Soekarno), as though this wounded plunderer was a victim of his nationalist ideals and not of his poverty and unlawful greed. The man, thus fortified with political slogans, only cried out for his mother, however, as so many young men had done in the past years in every language of the globe.

It was getting on for twelve when we arrived at the hospital. Two night orderlies—Indonesians—lifted the stretcher out of the lorry and deposited it with the patient beneath an arc-lamp of several hundred candle-power. The light obviously tormented the man.

"Is the doctor coming soon?" I asked.

A nod in reply. They could not understand why I should want to see the doctor himself.

After a few minutes he appeared. A cultured young Javanese

with a gentle, friendly face. He gave me a quick look, and before a word had been spoken he too had ranged himself on the side of the patient against me, the white man who had come to deliver up the sad results of a shooting affray. He said nothing, however, and gave all his attention to the wound.

"Do you want anything further?" he asked me presently in Dutch.

"Forgive me—but I should like to know what are his chances of recovery."

"What did the man do?" asked the doctor, instead of answering my question.

I told him, and he sighed when he heard the word looting. Possibly something in my attitude, the choice of words in my short account, had helped to bridge the gulf between us to some degree. The hostile curtness of a few minutes earlier had disappeared from his voice when he gave me the answer to my original question.

"I hope to be able to save him."

I thanked him and left. "What did the chap say? Will he be all right?" the Scottish driver asked me. When I repeated the doctor's words, his relief was obvious. Only the *pemoeda* in his policeman's uniform seemed to be but half satisfied.

The three of us drove back, at a breakneck speed now, jolting and jiggling over the post-war Batavian roadway.

* * *

For some time past the looting had not confined itself to the shops and warehouses of the well-to-do Chinese merchants in the Old Town. Complaints came in from Eurasians in the suburbs and from Dutch ex-internees, of whom by now a number had returned to their former homes. Even in the centre of the town people were not safe at nights from murder and robbery. Armed *pemoedas* assembled in the immediate vicinity of the Koningsplein and molested passers-by; a campaign of kidnapping had also begun. The only thing people could do to protect themselves was to organise a sort of local watch.

One evening I had been invited out to dinner with some friends in the southern part of the town. While we were drinking our coffee, we heard the sound of the tom-tom, obviously

not very far away. Two of the house servants, who had returned to their former master after the occupation, came nervously into the room and of their own accord turned out the lights. We went into the garden to listen. The ominous drumming, which but a moment ago had been increasing at a feverish rate, had stopped for the time being; there was nothing now to be heard but the loud chirping of the crickets in the warm pre-monsoon evening. The neighbours, who had also come out from their hastily blacked-out house, were worried lest my car should attract needless attention. So the chauffeur drove it inside. I can still see the tense anxiety on the faces of the cook, the old house-boy and the gardener, as the three of them crouched together beside the garage door.

We waited a while and when, after about an hour, nothing had happened, I was advised to go home. The later the hour, the more unsafe the streets became, and it seemed that this had been another false alarm—just part of the war of nerves. So I said good-bye and drove off. We had hardly turned the first corner, however, when from behind the trees lining the road a number of armed youths rushed out. The chauffeur, although extremely nervous, had the presence of mind to jerk the steering-wheel round and drive on to a narrow bridge before our would-be assailants had had time to jump on to the running-board. In the middle of the bridge stood a few more *pemoedas*. Their comrades shouted out something to them, but they were too much occupied with self-preservation to cause us any annoyance; the car just shaved past them as they pressed themselves back against the railing with their stomachs drawn in.

In the darkness I had not noticed precisely where we were, but I guessed that we had crossed the canal between Grisse Road and Madoera Road. We now drove at a good pace towards Theresiakerk Road and were just thinking we had reason to congratulate ourselves when, half-way along Holle Avenue, almost within earshot of the headquarters of the 23rd British-Indian Division, which fronted on Koningsplein-Zuid, we fell into a new trap. A whole troop of youngsters, waving their arms hysterically, held us up.

One car already lay overturned in the road, and now we became the centre of interest. From both sides the young rogues jumped on to the running-board, peering ferociously into the

car with their dark eyes, and among the arguments used to persuade us not to be up to any tricks was a revolver—apparently the *pièce de resistance* of this gang—which was held impudently in our faces.

The chauffeur, an elderly Eurasian, his pock-marked face tanned by the tropical sun, could speak Malay and Sudanese both equally well, but now he seemed to have become dumb and looked straight in front of him with a curious fixed expression; I should probably not have understood the meaning of this look had not I, too, been born in the country. Only his body was actually present; everything else that made up his ego had departed to a world where nothing and no one could reach him. I don't want to make myself out more courageous than I am, and I willingly admit that my heart had been in my mouth when a little earlier, on the bridge, we had had such a narrow escape, but the direct contact had the effect of an anti-climax. I discovered that the unseen threat had been more disconcerting than the reality. I suddenly felt that this night's adventure was no more exciting and dangerous to me than it was to these boys. While they were trying to intimidate me, I saw that they themselves were looking round apprehensively—at any moment a British-Indian patrol might turn up. My uniform and the word "press" (was respect for the press an order from their chiefs?) got us safely through this ambushade. The seventeen or eighteen-year-old leader put his head on one side to decipher the words "war correspondent" on my epaulette, then waved with his revolver to another group, a little farther on, and gave the order: "*Boleh djalan teroes!*—This car can proceed."

The Eurasian chauffeur returned to earth from his temporary retreat in a fourth dimension and put his foot on the starter. A little farther on a fruit-vendor was still sitting in mortal terror, tucked away behind his baskets; we could see the whites of his eyes peeping out over a pile of bananas.

On several other evenings when I drove into the Old Town along the Molenvliet canal to eat in a Chinese restaurant, I saw similar young hot-heads, armed and standing together in little groups, looking very warlike; but along this route with all its traffic they confined themselves to silent demonstrations.

Meanwhile, however, it is not difficult to imagine the sort of nights the Dutch women, who had returned to their homes with

their children, had to go through. The women were not lacking in courage, or they would have gone back to the camps, where they would have been under military protection. But they did not, and by day when the sun was shining, things didn't look so bad; they could then laugh at the terrors they had suffered in the darkness. How could you possibly voluntarily abandon your home now, after having implored to be allowed to return to it? Perhaps next week your husband would be back from Bangkok—and what would he think of you? After all, others were putting up with it, too, and saying to their children: "Go to sleep, Mummy's keeping watch, and the soldiers will be here in no time if anything should happen! They're a match for these rascals!"

Then night falls again; it grows dark in the garden, the bats flutter noiselessly through the veranda. The tropical night, with all its unfamiliar sounds, has in itself something menacing and uncanny about it. Then, if you hear the beating of the tom-tom warning against approaching danger, and you are a woman alone with your children in a Dutch colonial house, open on all sides. . . .

* * *

But it was not only at night that Batavia had become unsafe. There was shooting in the day-time as well, sometimes regular skirmishes, as for instance, one afternoon when, at the level crossing at Noordwijk, in the very heart of the town, a train-load of armed *pemoedas* halted and, without more ado, opened fire. The atom market is also in that part of the town, and the stall-holders are said to have packed up post-haste on that occasion. I happened to be at Public Relations writing an article, and for some time had been hearing shots through the tip-tap of my Underwood portable. At first I wondered whether it was worth while interrupting my work for it; when, however, I did after all decide to have a look and appeared on the scene of operations, everything seemed to be over. I don't think there were many casualties, but I heard some English soldiers complaining that the Dutch, when they returned fire, might have taken the trouble to find out whether there were any Allies stationed on the other side of the level-crossing. From that remark I could only conclude that the whole disposition of

troops must have been extremely unfortunate. But then I am no strategist.

One Sunday morning Charteris and I were sitting on the balcony of our room drinking a cup of coffee, just served up to us by Simin, gazing drowsily at the usual parade of fruit-sellers and strollers on the other side of the Molenvliet. A group of Indonesian idlers were standing watching the bustle in the garden of the Hotel des Indes, where lorries full of women and children were coming and going. Everything was quiet and peaceful in the glorious light of the tropical morning.

The Scottish sentry at the entrance attracted a good deal of attention, too. His short, rapid steps, marking his right about turn with a crisp accent, often evoked cries of astonishment from newly arrived onlookers (I had already seen the little brown street urchins imitating him); but even more amazement was caused by the company's dog, a stray picked up on the streets, with the pointed ears of the *kampung* pariah. In contradistinction to all his fellows he had been able to eat his fill; he lived the life of a pet, and his regular place was under the awning where, in pre-war days, one used to see the gigantic Sikh with his snow-white turban, pride of the Hotel des Indes, regulating the incoming and outgoing traffic. In a Mohammedan community nothing is more deeply despised than a dog, and there sat one of these "untouchables" in the shade, his eyes blinking with well-being, while his master had to march up and down in the blazing sun!

A new note in this scene was provided by two British-Indian soldiers who were out on leave. Each one sitting with military erectness, his gun between his knees in a *tiga-roda*, they were inspecting the world on this particular Sunday morning. Suddenly a sharp, dry report, and the Indian in the rear vehicle clutched at his heart and staggered out, while the Malay quietly pedalling behind him, sprang like lightning from his saddle and crouched down meekly beside his tricycle. The Indian from the vehicle in front jumped out also and, in his first bewilderment was about to run away, but he thought better of it and turned round towards his companion, who sank bleeding into his arms. The sentry from the Hotel des Indes hurried up, eyeing suspiciously the rapidly dispersing crowd of onlookers, but the assassin who had chosen this hour and this place for

his vendetta was nowhere to be seen. The victim was carried inside. An Amboynese soldier from the Djaga-Monjet Alley came to see what the trouble was, what the shot had been about. Finding everything quiet, he went back. More strollers came into sight, ignorant of what had happened here but a minute before. Along the Molenvliet a tram, full to overflowing, came jingling along—displaying all along the side the proud slogan: “*Darahkoe panas, hatikoe keras*—Our blood is hot, our hearts are strong.” And so life went on. Except for the dying man inside.

* * *

If my memory serves me aright, it was on that same Sunday morning that a rumour reached our ears that the Kramat camp had been attacked by *pemoedas*. I heard it at Public Relations, where I arrived just in time to join three other journalists who were driving out there. We were not yet clear of the Koningsplein when, in an undefinable way, we sensed danger in the air. The streets seemed remarkably empty; here and there we saw some Indonesians and one or two whites taking cover, obviously feeling uneasy about things. At Parapattan we came to a standstill; about fifty yards ahead of us, a group of soldiers were frantically waving their arms as a signal to us to turn back. We pulled up and, as we did so, we observed that the warning had not been superfluous. In a dead-end garden path on our left several young Indonesians bearing carbines were running excitedly up and down, having obviously been trapped, while on the other side of the road, now emerging from behind the trees, we saw three or four British-Indians and a couple of young Eurasian civilians with bare feet and in their pyjamas, one of whom was carrying a shot-gun.

At the wheel of our car was my colleague, John Bower of U.P., who had been through the Japanese occupation of Java. Besides regarding him as an able journalist, I had always taken him to be an extremely level-headed man. But, instead of simply going into reverse, which, in the circumstances seemed the safest way of getting out of trouble, he amazed us by, first of all doing nothing at all, and then undertaking the complicated manoeuvre of turning the car round. He certainly was not the person to accept advice in a moment of danger; and in

that he was right, for he was offered more advice than he could possibly follow. However, we succeeded in getting away without harm, taking one of the Indians with us, who told us he was due to report at his barracks at Salèmba. Salèmba lay beyond the Kramat camp, so we were going in his direction.

At a speed only rivalled in American gangster films we drove through a number of streets, all ominously deserted, and half-way to Tjikini we turned to the left and drove along by the Tjikini hospital until we arrived at the Kramat camp. Here the inmates expressed surprise that the camp was supposed to have been attacked; they themselves hadn't noticed anything. But they thought there was fighting at Pasar Senèn, nearer the town, or else somewhere at Tanah Tinggi. At least some tanks had gone off there, they had seen them pass, and, anyway, that seemed to be the direction from which all the noise was coming.

As we were getting into the car again to drive away, a Dutch major called out to us from the camp, advising us on no account to take the direct route to Pasar Senèn, at the same time pointing to some stationary tram-cars a few hundred yards farther along the road, which, he said, were serving as cover for *pemoedas* armed with carbines. Indeed we could see for ourselves now that there was some movement going on near the trams. But might this not equally well have been passengers who had dismounted and were waiting there until things became quiet again? While we were considering what was our best course, the major begged us, at any rate, not to remain where we were, in the direct firing-line of the camp defences.

We seemed to be having an unlucky day. Bower drove the car a little way back into the side-lane, watched morosely by dark Indian faces, peeping through the loop-holes in the bamboo enclosure.

At the same moment we heard shots, seemingly from the top of the tram-cars, and a military lorry which was driving at top speed from the direction of the town, began to swerve so violently that our hearts were in our mouths. The driver got back on to his course, however, and came to a halt outside the camp, where a companion sitting beside him—they were both British-Indians—dragged him from his seat at the wheel. He appeared to have been shot in the neck and was carried in and

laid on a table. A doctor was fetched and attended to him immediately. In the camp itself all this seemed to cause no unusual excitement. The Sunday service went on without interruption. At the entrance stood a few mothers rather anxiously on the look-out for their children, who had gone into the town that morning and had not yet returned.

To avoid another lecture from the major, we went to the opposite side of the wide Kramat Road, and from our new position looked across in the direction of the stationary tram-cars for a while. The fingers of the Indian soldiers behind the bamboo loop-holes must have been itching to settle accounts over there and avenge their wounded fellow-countryman, but their duties were confined to defending the camp, and such an expedition could hardly be said to come under that head. Meanwhile no further cars were approaching; obviously they had been warned on the farther side by now. True, an unsuspecting young Malay woman came into sight walking along the sunny road, her sunshade held elegantly over her shoulder. And a heroine on a bicycle—a European nun, swathed in thick black cloth, who was breathlessly pedalling along in the tropical mid-day sun. She was not to be deflected by such things as shooting affrays, and the *pemoedas*, to give them their due, had let her pass unmolested. Under the occupation the nuns had won for themselves a reputation for self-sacrifice and courage only equalled by that of the doctors. Possibly the legend of their nobility had even forced Soekarno's Youth Army to respect them.

Apart from the peacefully strolling Indonesian girl and the cycling nun, her hot red face framed in a gleaming white hood, there was no living soul to be seen on the Kramat Road. The European houses on either side looked defunct. Yet they were all inhabited, and, after having barricaded their doors as well as they could, white women and children were sitting within with beating hearts listening and waiting.

When we drove back over the same circuitous route and at length reached Pasar Senèn, the streets were beginning to fill again, and there was nothing to be seen but the tail end of a tank and a few Red Cross cars driving off. We had no time to linger, since some of us were beginning to get anxious lest interesting news about the incident might have come in to

Public Relations and ought to be cabled at once. Details could be collected second-hand later on.

On our way we called in at the so-called "Tenth Battalion's" barracks, situated in the Waterlooplein, not far from the scene of the disturbances. These barracks had been used as a Japanese prison-camp for Dutch soldiers, who were now gradually being medically examined and formed into a special guard. We hoped we might pick up more information here, but once more we encountered a healthy prejudice against the press. They knew nothing, and indeed expressed surprise to hear that there had been any fighting in the immediate neighbourhood.



The foreign correspondents among us who frankly opposed the Dutch Administration in Java, in trying to prove its superfluity pointed among other arguments, to the fact that the public services functioned just as well under their present Indonesian management as they had under ours. Although, to some degree, the accuracy of this might be called into question, I must pay my tribute to the efficiency of the Indonesian railway system, for instance, in maintaining a service of incoming and outgoing trains. The fact that, even in the immediate vicinity of the town, the *pemoedas* attacked the trains and carried off as prisoners European, Eurasian and Amboynese women was not the fault of the organisation in Batavia.

The Batavian Water Board might have won more praise if it had not been for the rumours, which cropped up from time to time, that the reservoirs had been contaminated by the *pemoedas*, with the result that even the Indonesians themselves dared not use the water. The telephone system functioned moderately well, although when you asked for a number you were liable to be greeted with a patriotic "*Merdeka*" from the girl at the other end of the line. If you responded to this with a similar greeting, you would be put through to your number. The Telephone Exchange, however, appeared to keep a black list. Certain subscribers (some of them Indonesians who were rather too friendly with the Dutch and English) complained that they could rarely get a number; others declared, sighing, that the telephone operator would not put them through until they had told her *why* they were ringing up a particular number.

Occasionally, too, the Exchange would interrupt a conversation with admonitions. I used now and then to be rung up by an educated Javanese, who always spoke French to me to avoid eavesdropping; the telephone girl thought this highly amusing and would punctuate our conversation with exclamations of "oui, oui" and "merci". The military and civil authorities had their private lines with English-speaking European personnel and were not, therefore, subject to this telephone-terror, which sometimes was merely funny, but could be less funny at other times as, for example, in cases of severe illness when medical attention was urgently needed and, just to annoy you, the operator would continually give you the wrong number.

I have already spoken of the Indonesian police. The Japanese had removed all the older members, who had served under the Dutch, and replaced them by youthful enthusiasts (some no more than fourteen years old) for a Greater Asia under Nippon's leadership. So that now the police force, while to all appearance co-operating with the Allies, was actually no more than a tool in the hands of the Revolution. This appearance was all the more deceptive because the inspectors and constables, having no new uniforms, still wore the Netherlands Indian uniform of pre-war days. The part played by the police in inciting the populace and the amount of pressure they exercised was to be fully exposed when, eventually, High Command, suspecting some sort of collusion of this kind, decided to take drastic measures and, amongst other things, had the headquarters of the Indonesian police in Koningsplein-West cleared and taken over by the military. The people concluded from this action that the power of the corps was broken, and on the very same day it was possible once more for a European to make his purchases in the markets unmolested, while on the bridge opposite the Harmonie Club there suddenly appeared a whole line of *tiga-rodas* waiting for fares from the Hotel des Indes and the Hotel des Galeries. Latterly, if you hailed a *tiga-roda* in the street, either the driver refused to catch your eye, or else it had been: "*Poelang, toewan!* —I'm going home, sir!" Now happy relations were restored, and while he trundled you along, a driver would even dare to complain what a nuisance the *pemoedas* were.

Talking of *tiga-rodas*, a friend of mine, who was driving home in one, noticed that the cycling owner behind him didn't seem

to know his way about Batavia at all. "Don't you come from these parts?" he asked him.

"No, sir. I come from the Buitenzorg district. I am an *orang-tani*."

"A peasant? What about your rice-field?"

"O, *tanah tida lari, toewan* . . . the soil won't run away, sir, but there are other things which do run away."

"Your harvest, for instance?"

The man answered this question with a sly laugh. Then, sighing: "There are a lot of wicked people nowadays . . . it isn't worth while any more to go ploughing and sweating in the fields. So I just came to the town. After all, I must earn something for my wife and children."

The Javanese peasant suffered very heavily under the occupation. The Japanese forced him to surrender his harvest at a price fixed by themselves. They robbed him of his sons and sent them to Siam, Sumatra and Indo-China to build strategic railroads through swamps and jungles. It is to "Boeng Karno's" eternal shame that he lent his name to this export of slaves and with his "Romoessa" co-operated to the utmost with the Japanese in obtaining these forced labourers, tens of thousands of whom died in misery from malaria, dysentery, beri-beri and malnutrition.

And what was the position of the Javanese *orang-tani* now? We heard that in the interior many fields were lying deserted since the *pemoedas* had, in the name of the Republic, requisitioned the harvest, and bandits had carried off the one and only buffalo from the stable, threatening the desperate peasant that if he so much as dared to raise a finger against them they would pin him to the ground with a spear. According to all the reports that came in, the distress in the villages was indescribable. What else was to be expected after three and a half years of merciless exploitation?

In the villages to the South of Batavia we saw with our own eyes the ragged condition of the people. Batavia itself seemed to have become the resort for beggars with the most hideous sores; particularly in the Old Town they hobbled about the streets, forming a melancholy guard of honour every midday and evening outside the Chinese restaurants.

Then the kidnapping—this canker eats its way in more and

more deeply in Batavia and elsewhere. People were carried off from their beds, or disappeared when they were just out for a stroll in the immediate neighbourhood of their own homes. And nothing more was ever heard of them. The mystery and silence surrounding these crimes was more unnerving even than the fear of being shot down in the street. What unthinkable fate lay in store for these kidnapped "enemies of the Republic"? Sometimes a body would be found, so mutilated that it was unrecognisable.

I occasionally used to pay a morning visit to the Dutch Secret Service and was allowed to look through the files of police reports, the contents of which repeated themselves with tragic monotony. Sometimes, sitting in the waiting-room there would be weeping Eurasian or Indonesian women—a husband had been carried off by the *pemoedas* in the night, or a threatening note had been received, signed with a dagger and the word "*Merdeka*". Now the husband was in hiding and the wife dared not return to her home. The Indonesian police played a lively part in this new sport. On one occasion they came, seventeen strong, to abduct an Eurasian family. The English received information of this just in time, so that Batavia was treated to the edifying spectacle of seventeen Indonesian policemen being carried off as prisoners in the very van in which the abduction was to have taken place.

The Eurasians were in a pitiable position. During the occupation they had had to submit to a Japanese stud-book ruling on the Nazi model, whereby their genealogies were sifted to the eighth or sixteen degree to discover whether they were "European" or "Indonesian". The "Indonesians" among them were then invited by the Japs and their Eurasian yes-men to declare themselves Asiatics and fight for Dai Nippon, the Protector of Great Asia. When several hundred young Eurasians responded with a somewhat too emphatic "no" to this call to arms, they were thrown into the Glodok gaol, maltreated and starved; in the last extremity they fed themselves on rats and any other edible object a cell can provide, and only a small number of them survived.

By remaining, almost to a man, true to their European status, the Eurasian population had called down on their heads the particular wrath of Soekarno's youthful disciples, and they had

to pay the penalty. It was they and the Amboynese whom the *pemoedas* picked on for their first victims.

The more primitive Eurasian, who lived on the outskirts of the *kampung*, had his only too easily inflamed imagination fed on thoughts of abduction, torture and a horrible death. When he rose in the morning he might find in his little front hall a threatening letter, similar to one I have lying in front of me at this moment, written in a garbled mixture of Dutch and Malay, and full of the terrible things he might be called on to endure, such as poisoned arrows to be shot silently at him from a blow-pipe and *goena-goena* (black magic), a power in Java before which not only the half-educated, superstitious "*kampung* Eurasian" trembles. The letter was also addressed to our Amboynese soldiers, but they were proof against such propaganda, treating it as a joke. The Tenth Battalion, to whom I have referred earlier in this book, come in for particular mention in this missive, the anonymous writer of whom warns his readers against their "campaign of murder". The Tenth Battalion, as I mentioned before, had their headquarters in the Waterlooplein and consisted of ex-prisoners of war, who had been given arms for their own protection and, at the same time had been made responsible for the safety of their immediate neighbourhood. Between these men and the *pemoedas* there was a perpetual state of war, and whenever there was any looting in their vicinity the Tenth Battalion took very energetic measures. Perhaps sometimes too energetic. I was not in Batavia at the time when an English officer, finding a number of captured looters, who had been shockingly manhandled, crowded into some of the guard-rooms of the barracks, called the press in. This was the incident which gave rise to the report of a "Dutch Belsen", and regrettably brought discredit on Holland's good name.

It was probably this visit from the press which accounted for the inhospitable reception given to us on the morning of the Pasar Senèn shooting affair.



The so-called "Depok Tragedy", which occurred in the middle of the month of October, shed a lurid light on the pitiful plight of the Eurasians outside Batavia.

Depok, half-way to Buitenzorg, was a Christian community consisting of Eurasian families and of Indonesians whose forefathers had embraced the Christian Faith as far back as the eighteenth century. It was on about the 12th or 13th of October that the first rumours reached our ears of a disaster which was said to have overtaken these people. Fugitives, who had managed to get as far as Batavia on foot, brought with them alarming tales of gangs of bandits who, for the past week, had been carrying on a bloody Terror in Depok; houses were plundered and set on fire; women and children fled to the jungle to escape murder; the male members of the population were captured by the *pemoedas*, who made common cause with the marauders.

Allied Command in Batavia was overwhelmed with troubles at that particular time, and when, together with another correspondent, I paid a visit to Intelligence to find out if and when a military rescue-party was to be sent to Depok, the answer was that it had not yet been decided to send such an expedition. As, in any case, we wanted to know what truth there was in the stories, Charteris, Robert Kiek and myself (occupants of one and the same room) put our heads together and formed the, probably rather rash, decision to drive out in the direction of Depok and see what we could find out for ourselves. A French correspondent with a Dutch name—Verspoor—joined the party, and so, on the morning of the 16th October, the four of us (the five of us, I should say; I had almost forgotten Johnnie, our Chinese chauffeur) drove out of the town, wondering how far we should be able to get.

Apparently we were not to get very far. At the point where the auxiliary road to Depok leaves the main Batavia-Buitenzorg road, a significant barricade of heavy tree-trunks had been erected. We could see that farther along the road there were more barriers, made up of tar-barrels rolled together, but the first was the decisive one.

While we halted to examine it, we were treated to a political speech from a young *pemoeda*, aged, I should think, about fifteen, whom we had picked up on the way and who was sitting beside Johnnie with a great Japanese sword between his knees "to give us safe conduct as far as Buitenzorg". For he had made up his mind that Buitenzorg was our objective, and

so far we had not disillusioned him. Supported by two companions, also armed, he had held up our car just outside the Makassar camp to the south of Batavia, and demanded in somewhat imperious tones that we should display the red-and-white flag of the Republic "if only to ensure our own safety". Instead of accepting the protection of this flag, we had invited the young man himself to get into the car to protect us, as members of the international press, against any dangers that might threaten. After some hesitation he actually did accept the invitation, and not long after he had joined our party he had to help us to get past an ambuscade of Indonesian Auxiliary Police—lanky youths, who pushed the muzzles of their carbines, in a most unfriendly manner, through the bamboo intrenchment behind which they had hidden themselves. They said they had taken up this position as a measure against plunderers, and evidently they regarded us as such; at least, it took a lot of negotiating to induce them to let us pass.

Our protector was not particularly pleased to see us display so much interest in the barricaded side-road to Depok. In high-sounding phrases he told us of the misdeeds of the Christian population of Depok, who had refused to rally round the Republic and had thus laid themselves open to the fury of the people and had had to be put under protective arrest by the *Tentara Keamanan Ra'jat* (People's Army of Security). He advised us not to linger longer than necessary; such behaviour would only give rise to suspicion among the loyal Indonesians in the neighbourhood.

In such circumstances, it did in fact seem better first of all to drive on to Buitenzorg and inform the C.O. of the battalion of Gurkhas stationed there of what we had seen, in the hope that he would show some sympathy for our plan to go and find out how the land lay in Depok and might also be persuaded to lend us a couple of men as an escort.

We had no luck in Buitenzorg. As we drove into the barracks at the entrance to the town we heard shots and could see, not two hundred yards ahead, that there was some sort of disturbance. When we got in we were told that serious looting raids were going on in several different districts. The C.O., Colonel Greenaway, had himself gone out with a party to restore order. One or two extremely agitated Eurasians had come to take

refuge in the barracks and they regaled us with stories of murder, plunder and abduction.

Our *pemoeda* had been completely dumbfounded when we turned into the barracks without having informed him of our intention. He felt far more comfortable among the Gurkhas, and his Japanese sword, of which he was so proud, suddenly seemed much too big. He did not know how to conceal it and asked us if we would take him out and see him safely past the sentry; he supposed we didn't need him any more. Certainly, for the moment, we were able to manage without his protection, and the irony of fate had decreed that he should now be dependent on ours. However, we were quite willing to grant his request and, while we were depositing him on the street, we noticed that it had become somewhat quieter in the direction of the disturbance. It was by now getting on towards midday and, as nobody could give us any idea of when the Colonel was likely to return, we decided to venture out into the town and see if we could get something to eat. We made a dash for it through the crowd, turned to the right by the palace of the Governor-General, on which the republican flag was flying (which, I must admit, gave me a shock) and threw ourselves on the mercy of a Chinese restaurateur, who, though he displayed little enthusiasm for our visit, did, nonetheless, serve us a *bamie* with salted ducks' eggs in the dining-room at the back of his restaurant. A Chinaman is always ready to take a risk if you pay him well.

On returning to the barracks we found the Colonel, but he was not favourably inclined towards our proposal. Depok was outside the zone for which he was responsible. Buitenzorg alone kept his hands full, as we had probably seen for ourselves. We had used the expression "humanitarian mission", but from morning until night, he told us, he did nothing else but organise humanitarian missions; it was enough to break your heart to see all the things that went on. He thought we were extremely foolish not to have stayed quietly where we were in Batavia. He didn't like to see the press running risks; it was not becoming to that precious corps, and it would certainly upset him considerably if anything should happen to us on the return journey. He was prepared, therefore, to let us have a couple of men to escort us back to Batavia, partly because it would give them an oppor-

tunity to see what exactly those auxiliary police fellows were up to along the main road.

"But, Colonel, if you are giving us an escort in any case, is there any serious objection to our making a *détour* through Depok?"

He sighed: "Oh, you people *are* a nuisance. All right, then, have it your own way. But, for Heaven's sake, don't start any nonsense, or *I* shall get into trouble. . . ."

We were agreeably surprised to find that, instead of a couple of men, we were given an escort of no less than thirty Gurkhas, disposed in several lorries. A regular army! Within half an hour we were once more at the barricade which closed the side road to Depok, but it no longer barred our way. An iron chain was slung round the heavy tree-trunks, and one of the lorries dragged them to the side; meanwhile several of the Gurkhas had hurried forward to roll away the tar barrels which were deposited behind them. Altogether we were held up for no more than a few minutes. We found a few more obstacles farther along the road, as we were approaching Depok itself, but these consisted merely of chests, chairs and tables, hastily thrown across the road, some of them still with the shoulder-yoke attached to them which had served to carry them out of the pillaged houses.

Those houses! There they stood, tragic, dumb witnesses of horrible debauchery, in the midst of their gardens, once so carefully tended, but now trampled flat by hundreds of bare feet. In the scrimmage grabbing hands had torn out everything that might have the slightest value, including door-handles and electric switches; light fittings had been wrenched from the ceiling, so that the lath and plaster came bulging through. Windows and doors had been hacked to pieces with axes, floors torn up in a feverish hunt for hidden money and now strewn with broken glass and china, torn books, manuscripts, photograph-albums, smashed gramophone records; covering it all a layer of fallen plaster and the stuffing out of mattresses, cushions, chair-seats that had been slashed open; even the gardens and streets were covered with a layer of kapok, like snow, producing the melancholy, ghostly illusion of a tropical winter landscape.

Between the skeletons of brick houses were empty spaces

where bamboo dwellings had been burnt to the ground, and still standing, like guards around the former homestead, we saw what used to be shady trees, their foliage destroyed by the flames, leaving them mutilated and meaningless, their seared branches woefully contorted in the blinding brilliance of the Indian midday heat.

One house stood proudly exulting in its unassailability, completely untouched in the midst of the surrounding havoc; the wooden gable was decorated with two crossed Republican flags, beneath which the owner had painted his name—Ahmad—followed by a testimony of his fidelity to the new Indonesia. And when we peeped inside through the barred window we saw that this fidelity had not stood Ahmad in bad stead; he had been rewarded for it with a truly impressive increment of furniture, more furniture than, even with the best will in the world, he could accommodate in his modest dwelling without turning it into a storehouse. Tables and arm-chairs were piled one on top of each other, and from the ceiling were suspended a dozen or more bicycles; there seemed to be no lack, either, of sewing-machines and sets of crockery. Ahmad himself was not there when we arrived; though he must have been worried about the safety of the possessions he had left behind him, he had probably joined the dark figures which we could see in the far distance fleeing for refuge to the rice-fields on either side of the road.

The village seemed to be bereft of every living soul, and when we stopped the car for a moment, silence enveloped us. The afternoon hours in Java always have a strange stillness about them, but here was something ominous and fateful that took one's breath away. Even the animal population seemed to have fled from ill-starred Depok.

The sergeant-major of the Gurkhas, a short, solid mass of muscle, as were most of his men, looked at us questioningly. He had brought us here. What next? What next, indeed! If we could learn nothing further about the Christian fugitives in the jungle, our expedition would not have accomplished much.

But fortune favoured us. An old man—rather deaf—had not noticed our arrival and was still quietly digging in his garden when one of the Gurkhas laid a hand on his shoulder. Trembling he came up to us, and we had to reassure him

before we could get him to answer our question, whether he knew anything about the fate of the women and children of Depok. "*Saja, toewan,*" he said suddenly, "*ada banyak perampoean dan anak-anak die Gedong-besar . . .* there are a lot of women and children in the Great House."

This was more than we had hoped to get out of him. Now, would he tell us where the "Great House" was. He choked back his nervousness and led us into a side road, which we had previously ignored. The road led to Depok police station.

The big square building, surrounded on three sides by a narrow veranda, had been spared by the looters, but otherwise it seemed, like all the other houses, to be deserted. The windows were shut, and no sound came from within, not even when the Gurkhas, after having made a rapid encircling movement, kicked the doors open. Not one of the hundreds of women and children shut up inside dared to utter a cry, and dark eyes, haggard with terror, stared at the first rays of light that penetrated the darkness within.

Only when they recognised the Allied uniform of the Gurkhas and saw some white faces did they rise to their feet, pitiful figures who had been huddled together to suffocation point in this confined space; it was almost as though a great wave lifted them up and threw them out into the arms of freedom. Sobbing, shouting, babbling incoherently in their joy, they surrounded us.

I saw a few fully white women, but the great majority displayed every shade of brown and belonged to the Eurasian and Indonesian Christian population. They all looked emaciated and ill, their eyes dark-rimmed from sleepless nights, and were wearing little more than rags. These women and their children had been tracked down in the jungle a week ago by the local Indonesian auxiliary police, who had brought them here under protective arrest, after having robbed them of the few belongings they had managed to salvage at the last moment. They had been allowed to retain only absolutely essential clothing, indeed, in some cases, even less.

Dazed with joy, these unfortunate women seized our arms and tried, all at the same time, to tell us of the sufferings they had gone through. "Oh God, if you had been only one day later, you would not have found us alive.—Yes, yes, they were

gong to murder us all to-night." "And they said that first they'd chop off our fingers, one by one! Beasts! But they lost no time getting away when you turned up, did they? Someone called out that the soldiers were coming, and you should have seen how they took to their heels!"

A woman, whose eyes had the gleam of hysteria in them, pushed forward to tell her story: "They murdered my youngest brother, sir, only because he tried to defend our home. When they first wounded him I put my arm round him and begged them to have mercy on him—'Can't you see that he's only a child?' I said. But they went on stabbing him, on and on until he was dead! Just look at my hands. . . ." She held out a pair of hands wrapped up in rags for us to see.

Another pushed her hair back from her begrimed face with a wild gesture; she too had a heavy heart to unburden: "My parents and two sisters had their heads chopped off. Those blackguards came and said 'Van Mook had our brothers in Batavia beheaded, now you are going to have your heads cut off in retribution!' The liars! The villains! I was the only one to escape, but afterwards when they had gone away, I went back and washed myself in my mother's blood and swore to have vengeance! Sir! Tell the soldiers to shoot the lot! No mercy on them! They showed no mercy to us!"

Could this horrible tale be true, or was it merely a feverish delirium? A morbid anxiety to make an even greater sensation where the actual facts in themselves were eloquent enough. Unwashed children in rags stared up at her with great dark eyes, greedily drinking in her words.

* * *

"How many of you are there? Have you a leader?" we asked in a first attempt to get a general idea of the situation.

"I don't know the exact number, but something like a thousand. Here in the main building about seven hundred. And then another three hundred or so in the back rooms and in the hospital."

"The hospital?"

"Well, that's what we call it. One woman there is dying, and one has gone out of her mind with fright. Then there's a

wounded man—he got a gash in his hand from a *golok*. And there are two new-born babies, and some old people who are sick. Our leader looks after them there; she's a nurse. But what can she do with no medicines, no bandages? Not even clean water. . . !”

A little later on we spoke to this leader, a courageous, grey-haired Dutch woman, obviously exhausted. All honour to her name—Mrs. van Loens Muller Massis. While she was giving us the facts of the situation in a soft, modulated voice, she tried to impose silence on her charges. But they were in too great a state of excitement; they all wanted to contribute their bit to the story.

“They let us starve, sir, and gave us hardly anything to drink!”

They were alarmed, too, lest we might consider the danger over. “How many soldiers have you brought? Have you posted enough sentries? Don't forget the bandits are still there! Hundreds of them, hiding in the reed-grass! They say the *pemoedas* are hand in glove with them—there's nothing to choose between them. And if they see that you have only brought a few . . .”

We were relying on the Gurkha sergeant-major to deal with this side of the matter, and it appeared that that had been his first task. The women, however, were only half reassured; I think they would have preferred to see the military leadership in the hands of the correspondents.

Suddenly there was a cry, echoed on all sides:

“And our men? Where are our men?”

In the light of what we discovered later, I am glad to think we were unable to answer the question at the time. For we were to hear that three hundred men of Depok had been taken to Buitenzorg by the *pemoedas*, and on the way from the station to the prison had had to run the gauntlet of a mob incited to hysteria and armed with spears and knives. Afterwards many of them lay for days in dirty cells, their terrible wounds untended, until eventually the Gurkhas took matters in hand.

Amongst all the women and children we noticed there were a few elderly Chinamen, whom the *pemoedas* had locked up with them, and one grey-headed Indonesian. The latter, it appeared, was the verger of the church, and the women com-

mended him warmly to our protection. "Don't do anything to *him*, sir. He is one of us!"

Meanwhile we had heard a few shots outside, and it seemed advisable to send them into the building again; the leader told the children, in particular, to keep quiet and not to cry, so that the soldiers could hear if any danger approached. But the shooting did not come to much, and the shouting which had accompanied it soon died down. One Gurkha came to report in an unmoved voice that he had shot down an assailant, who had crept towards him through the undergrowth. The sergeant-major nodded, and the man returned to his post.

* * *

It was too late in the afternoon to consider an evacuation. On the other hand, thirty men seemed inadequate to defend the considerable assemblage presented by the police station plus the adjacent buildings against a determined night attack. In the dark an infiltration might easily take place between the thin line of guards which had been disposed on the terrain—that, at any rate, was Charteris' opinion. As a British officer he possessed a natural authority over the native sergeant-major of the Gurkhas, and after talking things over with him he asked me if I was prepared to go, with an escort of two men, to fetch reinforcements. By now the adventure held us all in its grip, and I drove at breakneck speed back to Buitenburg, after smashing through some new barricades which had been set up in the short interval and, fortunately, consisted only of pieces of furniture. There was a loud crash as cupboards and chairs splintered beneath the wheels of the lorry and pieces of wood flew out in all directions, making the two Gurkhas grin all over their Mongolian faces.

The person who did not find anything to laugh at, however, was the colonel in Buitenzorg. But when I told him that we had freed what seemed no less than a thousand women and children from their prison, I saw that he was pleased. He went out to give his orders, and in less than half an hour I was driving out of the barracks again, this time with sixty Gurkhas, commanded by an English major, and with rice and drinking water for the women and children.

It was evening by now, however, and we were once or twice held up by yet more barricades, the removal of which in the darkness needed some circumspection. It seemed to me we were not getting on nearly fast enough, but I was probably wrong to worry too much about what might be happening in Depok in the meantime; in any case, the major appeared to be quite unperturbed.

Our arrival was greeted with cheers. The guard was strengthened forthwith, and the remainder of the men settled in behind the low wall of the veranda. When I went into the building to have a look round and to bring the good news that now there was really nothing more to fear, I found the women sitting up, eagerly listening to what was going on outside. The children, lying with their heads in their mothers' laps, were obeying the injunction to make no sound; not one of them was crying, in spite of the stifling, oppressive atmosphere of the rooms.

Then from somewhere in the distance came the sound of the tom-tom; one or two houses went up in flames, lighting the sky with a red glow, and it seemed that a first serious attack was about to be launched. "They've got one or two light machine-guns," said the major, after listening to the clatter for a minute or two. For the rest they seemed to be using a miscellaneous collection; now and again bullets skimmed right by the building or hit the brickwork, and, to the Gurkhas' amazement, sometimes small shot fell on the roof; lying behind their low wall they laughed and joked like boys, though the point of their remarks was, of necessity, lost on us. When the assailants were within a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards, they seemed to hesitate about venturing any nearer, although continually encouraging each other to press on; I could hear a fanatical *pemoeda* shouting "*Merdeka! Merdeka! Madjoe! Kalau maoe merdeka, misti madjoe! . . . Freedom! Forward! If you want freedom, you must press forward!*"

We three non-combatants stood most of the time more or less protected by the pillars of the veranda; sometimes we lay down behind the little wall with the soldiers, who were waiting till something became visible before returning fire. Even the sentries were reserving their shots.

"What's all the yelling about?" the major wanted to know, and when I told him he had a megaphone fetched from one

of the lorries and, pushing it into my hands, said: "Would you tell them to go home?"

He was accustomed to a more vigorous enemy and I could see that this amateur pottering bored him. "Oh, let them go to bed," he went on, and then explained to me what he wanted me to shout through the megaphone—that we were a detachment of Allied troops, that we had not the slightest aggressive intention against Indonesia and had only come to Depok to take defenceless women and children under our protection. At the major's request, I followed this up with a statement to the effect that we should be forced to return fire if this went on much longer, but that we invited our assailants to a peaceful parley; all they had to do was to send two representatives, who would be allowed to pass through our lines unmolested. If they were in favour of this idea they were to shout "*Saja!*" if not "*Tida!*" After I had conveyed this message, we waited a moment, listening attentively. We could hear nothing but the same old cries—"*Merdeka*" and "*Madjoe*".

When I had shouted myself hoarse with no result beyond more yells and more shouts, Robert Kiek took over from me. It was his début as a negotiator in Malay, but he made up for any gaps in his knowledge of the language by the power of his voice, and Johnnie and I prompted him, one at each ear, so that more than once he got muddled and mixed the two sets of advice. I myself was too sceptical of these attempts at mediation to be able to take them very seriously. The major, who seemed grossly to overestimate the intellectual level of our enemy, or else, perhaps, convinced that the sound of the English language must in itself have a calming effect, took the megaphone from Kiek and roared out something which, more or less, boiled down to: "This is the British Army, so you'd better leave us alone, you silly fools!"

But even such a powerful argument had no effect, though the sound of the English words did produce an amazed silence for a moment. Then the shouting began again with renewed force; the *pemoedas* seemed really to be pressing forward, and our first line of defence opened fire. This was more successful than all our verbal arguments; the enemy retreated, and for a little while all was quiet.

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There was something rather childlike and harmless about the friendly, somewhat under-sized Gurkhas, with their smooth Mongolian complexions—though, in reality, they were among the most fearless soldiers in the world.

The drivers of our lorries, however, were Sikhs, tall, martial fellows with wild eyes and luxuriant black beards, combed back and knotted. While our negotiations had been going on they had kindled a fire and put water on to boil, and tea was now passed round. Hundreds of hands stretched out greedily for a share, and I noticed two little Gurkhas, on their own initiative, carrying a kettle of the precious beverage over to the hospital.

A quarter of an hour later, when I went myself to see how the patients there had stood this first attack, if it could be called that, a little old lady with kind and noble features pulled me by the sleeve. "Sir, do you know the real history of Depok?" It must have been very near to her heart that she could speak of it at such a time and in such circumstances. Or did she perhaps feel she would like to give something in return for her liberation? Seeing my rather surprised smile, she began her story at once, speaking Dutch in a slow, melodious voice.

"You must know, sir, that once there was a Huguenot refugee whose name was Chatelain. He had had to flee from France, but here in Java he became a great man, even a member of the Council of India! Out of gratitude he adopted a Dutch name: Cornelis Kastelein. With the fortune he had made he bought an estate here in Depok, and on his death—on the 3rd of May of the year 1714—he bequeathed all that he possessed to his liberated Christian slaves and their descendants, on condition that they always lived together, one good pious family, from father to son, from son to grandson. What Kastelein wished came to pass. We have always honoured his memory, and, if ever he has looked down from heaven, he must have seen that we have never forgotten him. His grave has been lovingly tended, and the flowers on it kept fresh. It's a pity you can't go to our churchyard to see. . . ."

Occasionally I heard the report of a single shot outside. But the sick people in the hospital, the children squatting in a circle on the floor, heard nothing, completely absorbed in the legend of the good Christian gentleman, Kastelein, whose name and

reputation were so familiar to them all, and whose story was now being related so beautifully to this stranger!

Against the wall, sitting on a mat, were three old men in sleeping-suits—three greybeards, reduced to skin and bone, holding between their tremulous fingers the cigarettes which had just been given to them and which they were sucking at with greedy deliberation. After a little hesitation, one of them ventured to make a request: "Sir, I have five children who are still in the *Kumpang* Rawah Manggis, not very far from here. May I be permitted to ask if they too can be fetched away?"

I doubted whether the major would want to undertake this subsidiary expedition now, but promised to speak to him about it, making a note of the name of the *kampung*. "What is your own name?" I asked the old man.

"Mine, sir? Zacharias Jonathan."

The name was quite in keeping with its bearer: I had at once been reminded of the Bible when I saw the three old men sitting there together. Three apostles of the Southern Hemisphere. I asked the names of his children, and he wrote them down himself, laboriously, with a stump of pencil: I still have the piece of paper—Saartje, Samuel, Rosalie, Siska, Richard. . .

What are their ages?"

It seemed the youngest was four.

"I suppose you mean your grandchildren?"

"No, sir, my children, sir; they are hidden in the *kampung* . . ."

"But how old are you then?"

He wasn't quite sure and had to consult his companions. They decided he must be about eighty.

"Your wife must be a good deal younger than you?" was all I could find to say.

"Yes, sir, my wife is younger, sir." A rather embarrassed, but nonetheless happy, smile lit up his emaciated face. His companions seemed to find it a great joke.

"She is a native girl . . ." he added in further explanation.

* * *

Another attack followed, which differed from the previous one only in being accompanied by yet more shouting; appar-

ently in the meantime the *pemoedas* from neighbouring *kam-pongs* had been summoned to the battle by the tom-tom. Eventually our sentries had to return fire again; then followed another period of comparative quiet. The moon broke through the clouds and illuminated the countryside, so that any chances of infiltration were now negligible. The major, trusting to the vigilance of the sentries, allowed his men on the veranda to have a short sleep.

We three correspondents had parked our car as near as possible to the house, and we tried to get some sleep sitting up in it. The air outside was thick with mosquitoes, and only by keeping the windows tightly shut could we escape the maddening buzz, but then it became so stuffy that sleep was out of the question. Johnnie was unaffected by these inconveniences; he cheerfully spread his mat on the veranda, and later we noticed that he had found a companion—one of the girls had slipped out to chatter with him. Now they were lying together on Johnnie's sleeping-mat, laughing, sighing and whispering, and had found happiness in each other's arms. *C'est tellement simple, l'amour.*

In the middle of the night a young Eurasian woman knocked excitedly on the car window to complain that "one of those men with black beards" had come into the building at the back and was behaving "just as though we were his harem". As our responsibility did not extend to supervising the conduct of the Sikh drivers, we advised her to report the incident to the major; not long afterwards we saw the latter striding along and disappearing in the direction of the building in question, the woman at his heels.

I slept for a while, and when I awoke, probably about five in the morning, the moon had set and it was dark again, but I could hear voices and a bustle of activity round about the building. Some of the children were feeling ill from the bad air inside, and their mothers were carrying them into the garden or seating them on their chamber-pots in the veranda. Conditions were not unlike those in a lifeboat on the high seas: it was impossible to retire to any distance, however much one might long to be alone for a few minutes. As a result, however, the same spirit of universal tolerance had sprung up.

Several of the women wanted to kindle a fire and cook some

of the rice the soldiers had brought with them, and, since for the moment everything was calm, the major gave his consent. Very soon water and rice-milk were simmering on improvised stoves.

By getting into conversation with one or two of the women I obtained more information about the week's imprisonment they had been through. The local head of the *pemoedas*, they assured me, had behaved quite well according to his lights; he had even issued instructions that they were not to be ill-treated. But, no sooner was his back turned, than the guards—quite young boys—came up with the most horrible threats and began to torment, insult and beat them.

"And one lady went into a trance and said: 'I am the spirit of Cornelis Kastelein, and through my mouth Jesus Christ is speaking.' She believed it herself, sir. She was as pale as death."

"Yes, and she said to the *pemoedas*: 'What you are doing is wicked; but wait, very soon you will have to appear before the Lord Allah and give an account of your actions!' That gave them a fright, sir, I can tell you, the young whippersnappers; for the whole of that day they didn't dare to bully us any more."

"And a couple of them came along with their swords and daggers and held them above the lady's head! Like this, on the palms of their hands, sir! So that the spirit would enter into them! You see, they wanted to make them into *poesakas*" (sacred weapons), "for if you carry a *poesaka*, you are invulnerable! Its nothing but superstition, of course, sir. . . ."

* * *

At break of day shooting began again, and the women took refuge inside the building. But a little later one or two of them came out and asked whether all the precious rice was to be allowed to burn and whether *they* at least might not be allowed to stay by the fires. . . . Children were now beginning to cry with fear; they were worn out and could not control themselves any longer.

The major decided to begin the evacuation by taking the aged, the new-born babies and the sick to safety. He spread the sentries out rather more over the terrain, and, taking no more

notice of the sporadic shooting, we carried the old men and women out into two of the lorries, which had been drawn up in front of the hospital to receive them. Mothers handed out their babies to us and themselves followed with their humble little bundles. They all behaved beautifully, even the old people, who, clasping their arms tightly round our necks, seemed to weigh almost nothing. When these two lorries were full, the first convoy drove off.

The iron sides of the lorries made quite good cover, so long as they all sat on the floor and kept their heads low. But here and there the road ran between hills, and then the escorting Gurkhas kept a sharp look out on the steep slopes, or made reconnoitring excursions on both sides. Needless to say, we again encountered barricades, which had to be removed, but we were spared any incidents. This first group of evacuees was brought safely as far as the main road between Batavia and Buitenzorg. Here they all got out and sat down in the shade to await transport to the town, and the lorries were able to return to fetch a new load. . . .

We correspondents drove on to Batavia, where we sent off our cables and reassured our colleagues, who had been beginning to fear the worst for us, and now were beset by a still greater fear that we possessed a monopoly of what might prove to be important news. True, Depok did make some little sensation in the world, but as "news" it was soon overshadowed by other dramatic events—the battle of Samarang, the murder of Brigadier Mallaby at Surabaya. . . .

Meanwhile I could not put those hundreds of unfortunate women out of my mind, and when I had hurriedly finished my journalistic work, I joined Charteris, who was as anxious as I was myself to go back and see if the evacuation had been successfully accomplished. He had not been idle and had succeeded in making an arrangement with the British medical service for the sick and wounded to be taken away in Red Cross ambulance cars. So we went off to the Red Cross building in Schoolweg-Noord and were just in time to set out with that convoy.

On this occasion we had a formidable escort, a whole battalion of Gurkhas, just arrived at Tandjoeng Priok to reinforce the garrison at Buitenzorg. In a long procession of

newly disembarked lorries we drove out of the town and then southwards until we reached the Depok road, where hundreds of evacuees were waiting on the roadside for further transport—the police station had now been completely emptied.

Evidently we had been luckier with our lorries in the morning than the cavalcade which followed us. They had been shot at from the trees, and in a little shed at the side of the road lay two of the victims.

One, a little girl of twelve or thirteen, was quite motionless, and a first fly was crawling over her waxen face. Two blood-stained legs, stiffened in the throes of death, stuck out beneath her tattered dress.

Beside her, panic in her dark eyes, lay a child of about four. The doctor who had come with us from Batavia gave her a hasty examination and said, as he passed me, that it would be all over with her, too, in half an hour. "A shot in the belly—and with a dum-dum!"

The Gurkhas, who had landed in this country only a few hours earlier, stood a little way off, looking on in silence. They were used to the battle between man and man in the damp heat of the Burmese jungle—war on children was something new to them. The major who had spent the night with me in Depok police station asked me if I could explain why the snipers in the trees should have picked on the lorries containing women and children. "Are they such bad shots that they were afraid they would miss anything else? We soon fetched the fellows down—but it was too late for these two poor kids."

A third child was wounded, but, fortunately, only in the shoulder. After she had been bandaged, she sat up, feverishly excited, with a strange defiance in her eyes, beside the soldier driver, who had lifted her up on to the front seat of his car.

One of the Gurkhas offered me his water-bottle so that I could give the dying child a drink. She managed to lift her head and with eager hands clutched the neck of the bottle from which the cool water gurgled out. I found it difficult to grasp and accept the fact that no earthly power could save her life. But when, exhausted by this effort, she sank back, I could see from the dimming of her eyes that death was coming very near. A little later she rallied slightly; she did not succumb without a struggle.

Apparently she had no mother; her father was still a prisoner of war in Bangkok, so I was told. An aunt had undertaken to look after her, but she herself had a large family of children and, when the convoy with which she was to travel was ready to set off for Buitenzorg, she didn't know what to do. She wanted to stay with the little girl until it was all over, but her own children, frightened by the presence of death, tugged at her and implored her: "Mummy, stay with us—you're coming with us, aren't you?" Distracted and unhappy, she yielded at length to their clamour, and the dying child was left behind alone among the foreign soldiers.

There were many other heart-rending scenes. The sick were to be taken in the Red Cross cars to the hospital in Batavia, but all those who were not ill were to go to Buitenzorg, where it was easier to find accommodation for so large a number than in the overcrowded capital. Thus a decrepit old man was to be separated from his daughter, to whose loving care he was accustomed. "Tell him he'll be all right in the hospital with nurses to look after him," said the doctor, who was too busy to attend to all the private worries of his patients himself. I took the comforting message, and his daughter, fighting down her own grief, said to him: "You won't be alone there, dad, they'll look after you well, and you'll get all sorts of medicine I can't give you. And presently, when you're better . . ." There was no answer. Big tears rolled down the thin, yellow old face, as he clutched at her hand helplessly.

When the stretchers with the sick and wounded were carefully lifted into the ambulances, the little girl was still alive. The end was to come on the way back to Batavia in the dark interior of the closed, jolting car.

* * *

Again and again since that day I have asked myself what strange hatred can have possessed those men, hidden in the thick foliage of a tree by the wayside, to let the armed soldiers pass by unmolested and aim their guns at the lorries packed full of women and children.

Such a target could hardly be missed—but was that the reason? Could they not bear the thought that their prey was

going to escape them after all? Did their power over these helpless women and children mean so much to them?

When they climbed into the tree with their carbines, they must have known they were facing death—once they had fired their shots, escape would be impossible.

Unless, of course, you possess a *poesaka*-weapon, which makes its bearer invulnerable. . . .

* * *

On the following morning Dr. Mohamad Hatta invited the Press to a conference. Or rather the invitation came in the name of the President, and the correspondents, who had expected to see Soekarno himself, were somewhat surprised to find only the Vice-President. They did not hesitate to express their surprise and asked whether what they were about to hear was "official" and authorised by the President. Hatta, looking up calmly from behind his gleaming spectacles, said that the President had gone to Tjandjoer (in the Preanger regency) on urgent business and was not aware that the conference was taking place, but would certainly give his sanction to everything that was about to be communicated to us. He, the Vice-President, accepted responsibility for that.

This announcement was received with some reserve. The feeling that the Press had been "deceived" still persisted, and this was not the only occasion when I have seen proofs of their susceptibility in this respect.

It is curious how the atmosphere at such meetings can vary; sometimes from the very beginning there is a restiveness in the air, for which it is difficult to find a reason; often it originates in a mere trifle. On this particular morning Mohamad Hatta had from the very outset a bad-tempered, aggressive group of journalists confronting him. Easterns are sensitive to atmosphere, and he must have felt it, although he was careful to preserve an appearance of tranquillity and amiability.

The conference was held in the President's house. We had had to pass a guard of *pemoedas* on entering, which turned out as each car arrived, boyishly proud of all this interest in the Republic. The Vice-President received us in a long room, where a number of reporters from the nationalist dailies and

the Republican news-agency "Antara" had already assembled; they were whispering excitedly and feverishly making notes, a united group, all members of which could twist every word to be spoken here into propaganda for their cause. Mohamad Hatta did not, or pretended not to know English, and every question had to be translated for him by an interpreter, who then had to listen to his answer and translate that for the benefit of the correspondents. This was a cumbersome procedure, which gave the Vice-President ample time to think before he answered, but which did not help to make the atmosphere any pleasanter. To make us feel more at ease, iced tea was handed round by servants.

It seemed we had been called together to listen to an exposition of the case for extending Republican authority. The present state of affairs, Hatta pointed out to us, merely led to ever increasing confusion. At the moment authority was distributed between four parties: the Indonesian Republic, the Allied Army of Occupation, the Nica (Netherlands Indies Civil Administration) and the Japanese, who still bore a share of responsibility. How could a position of this kind yield good results? For this reason Dr. Hatta wished to make the following proposals:

1. Henceforward no Dutch troops be allowed to land in Indonesia;
2. The Dutch troops now in Indonesia to leave the country;
3. The Nica to cease its activities;
4. Pending the day when the Indonesian case could be laid before a commission of competent international arbitrators—in the interests of peace, order and security, the present Indonesian Government to be given *de facto* recognition, which would strengthen its authority and enable it to employ that authority to promote the welfare of the people.
5. The Allied Army of Occupation (having first purged itself of Dutch elements) to confine itself to its original task—the care for the ex-internees and the disarmament of the Japanese.

This declaration, read aloud in English by a Secretary, was at the same time an attack on the Lieutenant-Governor-General. Hatta spoke of the latter's "voluntary exile in Australia, whence His Excellency had promulgated pronunciamientos full of bloody threats against the Indonesians," and adduced as a reason

for the resignation, just announced, of Jonkheer Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer (Governor-General at the moment of Java's surrender to the Japanese), that the latter had felt unable to associate himself with the present colonial policy of the Netherlands.

We Dutch correspondents suspected that the Governor-General, who during his Japanese imprisonment had been able to observe Soekarno's activities, had probably criticised the present policy of the Government, but only because his whole being rebelled against the thought of dealings of any kind with so enthusiastic a collaborationist. No official, or semi-official, commentary on the resignation, however, had yet reached us, and for the time being we could only admire Mohamad Hatta's skill in exploiting the great personal prestige of the Governor-General to the advantage of the Republic. Without apparently uttering one untrue word, he was able to produce in the foreign correspondents an impression diametrically opposed to what he himself must have believed, or rather what he must have known perfectly well to be the facts.

In his quiet, slow way (still further retarded by the to-and-fro of translation) he showed himself to be a most adroit debater. When conditions in the interior of the country, exemplified by the incident at Depok, were criticised, he said that the Republic could not be held responsible; the people had been provoked by the Dutch. This was greeted with scepticism, and he was asked if he would describe the plunder and murder at Depok as an expression of righteous indignation. Very well, crime if you like, he admitted. At the present time there was a lot of crime in the country, and so long as the Republic did not receive the full support of the Allies—as, for example, by *de facto* recognition—she had not the power to suppress crime, the blame for which lay not with her but with others. For the rest, said Hatta, excesses were inevitably bound up with revolution. And could the American correspondent, who had put the question, lay his hand on his heart and declare that the United States was free from crime?

He went on to say that the Dutch had lost all claims on Indonesia for the sole and simple reason that they had surrendered this country and its defenceless inhabitants to the horrors of Japanese rule without making any practical effort to

defend it. If the English in Hongkong, in Burma and Malacca were now being hailed as liberators, and if the Americans had had a similar reception in the Philippines, it was because the peoples of those lands knew that the English and the Americans, with a full sense of their responsibilities, had brought their full strength to bear against the Japanese. What, on the other hand, had Holland done for Indonesia? Nothing. She had preferred to leave the fighting to the Australians, English and British-Indians, while she had taken to her heels.

These words, which were transmitted with much fire by the interpreter, were obviously intended to make pleasant hearing for the Australians, English and Americans in the room. We Dutch correspondents had kept silent when the name of Depok had been mentioned a little earlier in the conference; we had thought it better that criticism of conditions inside the Republic should come from the foreign journalists, but, as I was not sure how good the memories of some of them were, I now said: "Mr. Mohamad Hatta surely forgets the heroic and complete sacrifice the Dutch fleet made in the battle of the Java Sea? As well as the activity of the Dutch pilots and submarines in the early days of the war?"

My words were repeated to Hatta, and the interpreter answered on behalf of the Vice-President: "Mr. Mohamad Hatta was mainly thinking of the Dutch army in Java."

I knew that the national defence of Java had been a failure in many ways, and this was no moment to enter into a dispute with the Vice-President as to the degree of demoralisation produced in an untried army by complete lack of air-cover. I trusted that, at least, the English-speaking members among my colleagues would understand what I meant if I brought my interruption to an end by saying: "May we then say that Mr. Mohamad Hatta has made an incomplete statement?"

In this vindication of my country, I was not without support from some of the foreign correspondents, who had not forgotten that, immediately after Pearl Harbour, the Netherlands Indies had sent a large part of its sadly inadequate air force to Singapore and British Borneo to help bear the brunt of the first blows, and that at that time our submarines won world-wide renown with their record of "one Japanese troopship a day". But there were others, who wished the right to be on the

Republican side only, and they were annoyed that the Vice-President should be corrected. They rose in silent protest and asked if Dr. Hatta had any further statements to make; if he had not, they would like to depart.

This meant that everyone had to go, on penalty of being too late with his cabled report of this conference.

So the whole small army of journalists—there must have been twenty or more of us at that time—took its departure, and I could not help thinking to myself with some bitterness how vain now seemed the sacrifice of life made by our young men in those tragic months before the fall of Java.



Soon after this Charteris left for Surabaya, where he founded and edited an army news-sheet for the English soldiers fighting in that area. I asked to be allowed to become a subscriber to this journal, but he seemed to want to work his paper up into a second *Times* before subjecting it to my criticisms. Later on, in Singapore, I saw a few copies of it, and Brigadier Wardell, the head of Public Relations in the Far East, drew my attention to the remarkable fact that this army-organ, side by side with the news, published literary efforts and even verses by modern poets, instead of the customary comic strips. He was frankly curious to know what the Tommies would have to say about it. "Life out there isn't exactly a poem just now, you know."

There was serious fighting going on in Surabaya. At first everything had proceeded peacefully; the English had been able to land their troops without any incident, and a beginning had been made with the evacuation of the camps, when the unexpected attack on the British posts precipitated a state of war.

The overpowering of these posts by *pemoedas* and street-rabble was carried out in the usual barbarous manner. After a mere handful of English and British-Indian troops had fired their last shot in a hopeless defence, an orgy of slaughter began in which the mob, swelled to thousands, seized the hacked-off arms and legs of their victims and tossed them into the air with shouts of delight. No less horrible were the attacks on Dutch women and children who were being evacuated from the camps and were on their way to the quay in British Army lorries.

We were not exactly surprised at this, for what else had we ever seen of Soekarno's disciples save cowardly barbarity? What did surprise us, however, was the recklessness with which sixteen-year-old *pemoedas* flung themselves against British tanks. For the first time—and almost with relief—we noticed in this insurrection signs of idealism—indeed more than that, readiness to die for an ideal.

At Surabaya it became apparent that the extremists were equipped with something more than bamboo spears and *parangs*. The Japanese in East and Middle Java had seen to that. If they had to lose this war, at any rate they would make the flavour of victory as bitter as possible for us. After surrendering to the Indonesians voluntarily, or after a feigned resistance, they presented to the Revolution whole arsenals complete with instructors, not to mention well equipped modern airfields including the necessary fighters and bombers.

People were already beginning to speak of "the siege of Batavia". Republican armies were said to be encircling the town, and the news of the surrender of the airfields did not help to lessen the gradually increasing disquietude in the town. At this time the Republican newspaper *Merdeka* began a war-of-nerves of its own, publishing in its columns an appeal to "Indonesian pilots, mechanics and wireless operators" to volunteer immediately for active service. The English High Command ignored all this, probably, on their side, relying on the Spitfires and Mosquitoes, of which larger and larger numbers were landing on the Batavian airfields at Kemajoran and Tjililitan.

Although the Indonesian bombers held off, Allied Command had their hands full with the extremists. Whole truck-loads of food were unhitched from Rapwi-trains (Rehabilitation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees); the convoys between Batavia and Bandoeng, although strongly escorted, were liable to be attacked. Bandoeng itself passed through a crisis which at one moment looked like being serious. *Pemoedas* thronged into the town from all directions; armed gangsters began to plunder the suburbs, and with *Merdeka* as their war-cry, prepared to play havoc throughout the town. The Chinese and the Eurasians were seized with panic and decided to set up their own civilian guards; even the better protected white population felt far from easy and asked for arms. To prevent a large-scale

massacre, Allied Command reminded the Japanese garrison at Bandoeng, which had remained "loyal", of its obligation to maintain order. Japanese tanks drove out, and the plundering and massacring of Bandoeng was called off for the time being—fear of the Japanese was still firmly implanted.

There were hardly any victims to be deplored, but, in another sense, of course, we had to pay dearly for Japanese assistance. The questionable character of this help was exploited to the full in Indonesian propaganda, and, once again, completely undermined the prestige of the whites in the minds of the native population, who now less than ever were able to understand what the Allied victory meant. In the excitement of the moment Japanese soldiers in the streets were cheered—what a bitter pride the "conquered" must have taken in this tribute!

I happened to hear that the Dutch Colonel Asjes, one of the Rapwi-chiefs, was going to fly to Surabaya in his own plane, and I induced him to take me with him. He was thinking of staying in Samarang for the first day, which would afford me an opportunity of getting a first-hand account of the battle, lasting several days, which had just taken place there. The circumstances were similar to those in Bandoeng, with the difference that in Samarang it had developed into a tragedy.

Asjes himself was in the cockpit, and I had my first introduction to hedge-hopping. We frequently flew only a few yards above the ground, constantly having to rise, in order not to collide with the trees, whose tops swayed in the wind-storm produced by our Mitchell. This is not a method of flight to be recommended to sufferers from air-sickness.

We purposely chose the route via Krاندji and Bekassi, a Republican centre where rumour had it that a force of extremist troops was being built up preparatory to marching on Batavia. All we saw was a gathering of *pemoedas* on the railway lines (waiting for a Rapwi train?) and some young men drilling in the open country, who were so amazed at the sight of our plane that they forgot to take cover. Of course, it was unnecessary, but they couldn't know that. After all, their Republic—by means of the radio—had declared war on us. . . .

This was the story I heard in Samarang: Wongsonegoro, the Indonesian Resident appointed by Soekarno, had issued an order on the 14th October that all male European and Eurasian

citizens should be locked up. The *pemoedas* made no exception of the Dutch Rapwi-personnel, although their immunity had been expressly guaranteed by the Soekarno Government. Two British officers were also thrown into prison, but they were released later. Their protest against the arrest of the Dutch members of Rapwi produced no effect.

Meanwhile the state of excitement in the town had rapidly increased. There was talk of the *pemoedas* making an attack on the Japanese garrison on the following night, and the native population armed themselves with lances and *parangs*, hardly knowing from which side the danger might come.

Towards midnight firing began in the vicinity of the Japanese headquarters at Djatingala, gradually gaining in intensity. At half-past four in the morning some Japanese officers called at Rapwi-headquarters to announce that unless they were allowed to take up arms they could no longer guarantee the safety of the civilian population. Immediately after this announcement Japanese troops began to march out of Djatingala into the town proper. Withstanding a fairly strong opposition, they occupied the Bodjong-hill and there they arrested the Republican Resident, Wongsonegoro. Whereupon the latter communicated with the *pemoedas* in writing and tried to persuade them to put a stop to the fighting. The same attempt was made by Soekarno's headquarters in Batavia, but all without avail.

The Rapwi-authorities were particularly concerned about the fate of the thousand odd white and Eurasian men, who were still in the hands of the *pemoedas* in the Boeloe goal. Indeed, these imprisoned citizens spent some very anxious hours, but they escaped with their lives, and some of them told me what happened when the Japanese soldiers approached. Apparently the prison was built round a courtyard, and the *pemoedas* had more than a hundred Japanese crowded into seven small cells. These had been brought in during the course of the day and included the pilots and ground-staff of the airfield. Shortly before they abandoned the gaol, the *pemoedas* bayoneted every one of these unfortunate men to death.

The slaughter took place through the bars of the cells and with the docile co-operation of the victims. The order to stand up was shouted from outside—"Berdiri!" and time after time, with a fatalistic resignation bordering on madness, a Japanese

stood up behind the bars and allowed himself to be pierced with the bayonet. Many of them, with passionate defiance, tore open the coats of their uniform at the last moment, shouting: "*Tiada perdoeli! Bikin sadja! Kena hati!*"—I do not care! Strike away! Pierce my heart!" and so forth.

Harakiri.

I will pass over in silence the story of how the Japanese, as they forced their way into the building and found the bodies of their comrades in the cells, wreaked vengeance on the *pemoeda* gaolers, who had been unable to flee from the prison in time. It was a bloody and horrible day of reckoning.

On the 18th October, three days after the battle began, about fifty Dutch women and children, who had been shut up in the Hotel Pavillon in the centre of the town, were liberated. I saw many traces still of the recent fighting, but the women had gone through too much in the past three and a half years to have their equilibrium upset by a few hours of acute danger. "It was the Japs they were after this time, sir, not us, and the *pemoedas* said: 'The Jap is your enemy, too, isn't he?' After all, they knew what we had had to endure in the camps." The women sighed, and one of them said: "In the end we could almost have pitied them. Some of them were quite young boys, and they cried because they were losing; in their panic they jumped down from the first-floor windows—they might easily have broken their arms or legs. . . ."

The memory of one scene they had had to witness still made these women shudder. It had taken place just outside the hotel. Japanese prisoners of war were brought up in a lorry and handed over to the vengeance of the mob. "They looked terribly pale, but you should have seen how calm they were. Their faces were like stone when the rabble dragged them out of the lorry, and they were too proud even to lift an arm to defend themselves when they were hacked at with *parangs*. . . . The Japs certainly have courage. It seems impossible that they should have been so cowardly and vile with us."

* * *

On the following morning we were just about to take off again when a car drove up with an order from the English C.O

forbidding us to land at Surabaya. The airfield there was directly threatened by the Republican Army, and it was thought desirable not to provoke an attack by making too much use of it. The Indonesians had already opened fire on other aircraft trying to land there, not entirely without success.

So our Mitchell returned to Batavia and was able to give transport to a few women and children evacuees. I joined the party, trusting that some other chance might occur for me to fly to Surabaya. Before taking my place in the plane I had an opportunity of seeing the manner in which the *pemoedas* had been making use of their temporary control of the airfield at Samarang. Standing on the field were some Japanese fighters and one or two transport-planes. I went to have a look at them and saw that anything that could be unscrewed had been removed; rapacious hands had even torn the upholstery from the seats.



Shortly after this, in Batavia, the correspondents were invited to be present when Lieutenant-General Yuichiro Nagano, Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Army of Occupation in Java, and his Chief of Staff, Major-General Moichiro Yamamoto, were called upon to surrender their swords—they were held responsible for the “treachery” of the Japanese garrisons in East and Middle Java, who had handed themselves and their arms over to the Nationalists. Later, in Bangkok, I witnessed the same ceremony, on a much larger scale; on this second occasion no less than twenty high-ranking Japanese officers deposited their ancient Samurai swords on a table spread with the flags of the Allies, and thereupon, holding themselves erect, saluted the Union Jack, floating from a flag-staff. But the greater number of the participants did not deepen the solemnity of the scene.

The surrender of swords in Batavia took place in the headquarters of the 23rd British-Indian Division. Half a dozen tanks, their guns pointing at the building, represented the mechanised detachments of the Army of Occupation, and the front drive was lined on either side by Indian troops in strict formation—Sikhs, Mahratta's, Gurkha's, Punjabi's.

From the open windows of the room in which the British Military authorities and the press had gathered a few minutes earlier, precisely at the appointed time we saw two large saloon cars drive up. In the first sat the two generals, in the other a Japanese staff officer and an interpreter. The soldiers were ordered to stand to attention, but they did not present arms, as they had done just previously on the arrival of General Hawthorn, who was now seated at his desk, awaiting the arrival of the insubordinate Japanese officers.

There was dead silence in the room as the two men walked in, visibly embarrassed but not without dignity in their bearing. Behind them from the marble hall came the reverberating echoes of the Scottish sergeant-major's voice roaring out to the Seaforth Highlanders on guard below—"Stand—at ease!"

Nagano, the Commander-in-Chief, was the smaller of the two. His dark, heavy-jowled head seemed sunk in his shoulders, the Mongolian eyes were lowered, and his sword on its red leather strap, to which all eyes were involuntarily turned, seemed almost too big for him. He raised his hand to his unbecoming kepi in a salute and took up his position at a little distance from the desk. General Yamamoto, who was only slightly taller than his superior and displayed the same outward characteristics of a high-ranking Japanese officer, followed his example. The staff-officer accompanying them took his place just behind. The latter was carrying under his arm a brand-new leather dispatch-case, whose purpose and contents were to remain a secret to us. Did it contain anything at all?

The atmosphere was chilly and formal. General Hawthorn was known to us from a number of pleasantly informal press conferences, but now he was simply a British officer. After a few minutes he stood up, picked up a sheet of paper which lay on the table in front of him and read the charge.

"General Nagano,

"In my opinion you have wilfully and dishonourably neglected the duties which were assigned to you by the Allies at the time of the surrender. You have failed to keep order in Java as I charged you to do on my arrival; you have unscrupulously handed over your arms and equipment to the disorderly elements in this country, thereby making it pos-

sible for them to inflict losses on the troops under my command. In the name of the Allied Commander-in-Chief I now order your arrest and that of your Chief-of-General-Staff, General-Major Yamamoto. You must now surrender your swords to me, after which you will be taken by aeroplane to Singapore, where a judicial enquiry into your conduct will take place."

As might have been expected, the Englishman had kept all sentiment out of his voice; he read the words as though he was seeing them for the first time. His voice sounded monotonous, almost bored, and the only relief during the reading came from a bird somewhere outside in the kanari-trees, whose clear notes once or twice shrilled through the room. The Japanese officers stood there with drooping heads and let the English words float past them; heaven only knows where their thoughts were.

Then, declaiming like a schoolmaster, the interpreter began to read aloud the Japanese version of the text. He looked rather comic, as, basking in his sudden importance, he stood facing the two accused men.

When he had finished, silence fell again. Everyone was expecting Nagano to step forward and surrender his sword to Hawthorn; press cameras were in position, waiting. But the Japanese General seemed too dazed to understand what was required of him; the interpreter, therefore, leant over and whispered a few words in his ear; whereupon the little general nodded and began to unbuckle his sword.

He couldn't manage it at first, his small hands with their blunt finger-tips fumbled nervously. At last the buckles consented to release the sword. Nagano held it horizontally in front of his stiffly bowed head and, stretching out his arms, handed it to General Hawthorn, who received it and laid it carefully on the desk in front of him. Then Major-General Yamamoto stepped forward, and the procedure was repeated, to the click of the cameras.

When they had stepped back, by now scarcely able to hide their inner distress, an English military police sergeant took General Nagano discreetly by the arm; the two prisoners once more, and for the last time, raised their hands to their childish caps, and left the room. This time no sounds rose from the

hall or the garden. All was silent; I did not hear the click of soldiers' heels. A little later the two cars, now escorted by military police on motor-cycles, glided along the street, watched by the crowd that had gathered—Europeans, Chinese, Indonesians.

On the desk lay the two slightly-curved Japanese Samurai-swords. Journalists, photographers and Allied officers bent over them in fascinated admiration of the costly, inlaid hilts.

Outside we found the tanks still standing in position, dim blue-grey in the shade of the trees, lit up in spots by rays of tropical sunshine. Sombre steel giants, glorifying the total mechanisation of Western military power.

* * *

At the beginning of November a remarkable pamphlet came into our hands, entitled "Our Struggle" and written by a man whose name was seldom heard and who, indeed, was, at that period, still completely unknown to the foreigners among the correspondents—Soetan Sjahrir. Little did we guess then that a fortnight later he would be premier of the Republic of Indonesia.

We had become accustomed to simplistic propaganda in the totalitarian manner from the Indonesians, in which truth was not regarded as of the foremost importance. But here was an intelligent author, honest enough to see the faults on his own side.

The document presented an analysis of the position in Java. The injustices of the Japanese occupation, the tyranny and the alarming impoverishment could not fail, according to the writer, to bring demoralisation and brutality in their wake. In order to divert attention from themselves, the Japanese had sown the seeds of hatred towards other races, in the first place towards the whites and the Chinese. In order to implant this hatred in the people they had appealed to their nationalist instincts.

"A youth movement was instituted to awaken Indonesian nationalism, and, indeed, this nationalism appeased our young intellectuals, restive because they had no outlet for their emotions. The Japanese secret societies, such as the *Black Dragon*, the *Black Fan* and others, as well as the *Kempei Tai*"

(the Japanese Secret Service, Asiatic equivalent of the Gestapo) "appealed to the imagination of our young men, although in many cases hatred of the Japanese still persisted. The hearts of our young men were unconsciously influenced by Japanese propaganda; their ways and manners, their very thoughts had much in common with the Japanese. Their enthusiasm expressed itself in hatred of foreign races, whom the Japanese designated as their enemies—the Allied nations, the Dutch, the Eurasians (our own race!), the Amboynese and the Menadonese (both our own races!), the Chinese. The aim of the Japanese was to teach our young people to hate the whole world, themselves excepted. These are the elements from which a free Indonesia has to be constructed.

"When the Republic was proclaimed, the leaders of the new state were largely Indonesian officials, who had held office during the occupation period, or collaborationists with Nippon. This situation acts as an obstacle when we try to free our community from the Japanese influence so fatal in its effect on our young people. Political orientation, which had been greatly limited under Dutch domination, was completely lacking under the Japanese occupation; our young people were only fitted to receive orders, bow the head and offer blind adoration, just as the Japanese bows before his Emperor and makes of him an idol.

"Our young men took advantage of the universally prevailing unrest to whip up the nation to hatred of the foreigners now dwelling in the country, and all this marching with lances has already led to murder and robbery and other evils which do nothing to further our social revolution.

"The tardy arrival of the Allied Army and the collapse of Japanese authority before their arrival offered the Indonesian Republic a golden opportunity to establish its own authority. But it did not succeed in this as it had hoped. The foremost reason for this failure is that the leaders were too weak. Many of them are accustomed to bow and cringe before Japanese and Dutchmen; they are uncertain of themselves and do not know how to set about their task. Moreover, they feel they are under an obligation to the Japanese, who helped them to establish a free Indonesia and clothed them with authority."

With the typical Eastern love of repetition, in which perhaps there lies a certain power, Sjahrir continues:

“When Japanese authority waned and eventually collapsed completely, and when the Allies were slow to assert their authority, the Republic did not succeed in establishing its own supremacy, with the result that our nation now seems to be destitute of leadership. The confusion arising from this lack of leadership gave rise to undesirable actions, over which the leaders no longer had any control. The murdering and robbing of foreigners is a sure sign of the weakness of the leadership of the Republic, which is not yet regarded as a government to be reckoned with and respected.”

Sjahrir then goes into the question of the criminal activities in the country:

“Our young men have not yet a true understanding of the struggle, in which they ought to be setting an example to the nation. They have learnt to march, to attack when commanded and to die a hero's death, but they do not know how to lead the nation along the right path. Their methods of propaganda have been copied from the Japanese and are, therefore, fascist. Their state of mind is extremely disappointing. Our young men are burning with enthusiasm, but are groping in the dark. Without rightly understanding the meaning of the struggle they cling to their slogan—‘Freedom or Death’, and whenever they imagine freedom to be in danger, but have no opportunity to fight and look death in the face, they grow restive. The only cure for this restiveness is to be found in deeds. Deeds act on the mind like opium. The nation was drugged at first by the deeds of our young men, finding in them comfort and inspiration. But this injudicious activity can only end in disaster and weaken our position in the eyes of the world.”

Throughout this long document it is noticeable that Sjahrir is addressing himself to primitive, slow minds, which need to have an idea hammered in before they can grasp it. His argu-

ments are clear, however, and, when he is not blinded by his own fervour, convincing.

Again and again he warns his Indonesian readers against the danger the Republic is running of losing the sympathy of the democratic world, if she continues to pursue the path she is now following. For murder and plunder and race-hatred bear the stamp of fascism.

Then he enters on fresh grounds. He begins by stating that the Dutch "domination" actually only existed by sufferance of the English:

"We all know that after England had stolen Indonesia from the Netherlands and had restored it to them at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Dutch rule was not based on their own power, but on the patronage of England—simply because this suited England's policy."

Then he goes on to say that meanwhile John Bull's own prestige has dwindled and that America is now the supreme power in the Far East. American capitalism and imperialism will for a time hold the whole world in their sway. Indonesia, young and still defenceless, will be less able to stand against Uncle Sam's authority than other states and will, therefore, await with greater impatience the collapse of such a world without as yet possessing the power to bring this about.

After this the writer puts his case against our pre-war Indian policy. He demonstrates that the revolution is essentially more social than national in character.

"The way of life and point of view of the rural population were still medieval. The Dutch Government preserved all the remnants of Indonesian feudalism in order to prevent the progress of our nation. The provincial government, for example, was a tool fashioned by the Dutch from the descendants of our medieval nobility. Not only our princes, but also the Dutch overlords, still regarded our rural population as semi-slaves. Dutch despotism sought to establish its power by a fusion of modern methods with the medieval social order it had found in Indonesia, and became eventually an unmistakable example of fascism. Fascism in the colonies was a fore-

runner of the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini. Before Hitler had established concentration camps at Buchenwald and Belsen, the Boven-Digoel was already in existence. What our national movement was actually fighting, therefore, was medieval Indonesian bureaucracy and Dutch despotism."

These are hard nuts which were given us to crack. Is it possible that the case against us is justified?

In spite of Sjahrir's readiness to use and repeat the words "Dutch colonial despotism", the fact is that, so far as Holland is concerned, the Indies were never subjected to despotism. It is easy to refer to such Dutch despotism as an established fact, in the hope of finding credence, but it would not be so easy to produce instances. The Netherlands Indies have always been governed according to principles and laws, never despotically. Even the much-reviled East India Company was no despot. Like a zealous merchant, it sought to spread its influence by means of treaties and negotiations. That its methods were not gentle we know—but that is another matter.

On the other hand, there were typical despots among the Indonesian princes of the seventeenth century with whom she made her contracts; there have been minor despots since among the many rajahs; and finally there were miniature despots among the Indonesian officials and Eurasian sugar-planters. But anyone who charges our Indian Government with "colonial despotism" is making an untenable accusation. Sjahrir, who is sufficiently well-educated to know the meaning of the word "despotism", and who had Indonesian friends in the *Volksraad*, the People's Council, whose members were drawn from all political parties and groups of the Indian population, must have known that, from personal rancour or in his zeal to serve the cause of the young Republic, he was setting down a positive untruth.

I hardly imagine it is necessary for me to demonstrate that one is doing Hitler's slaughter-houses an injustice by describing them as copies of our pre-war camp for political exiles in New-Guinea. The man who suggests it had had personal experience of banishment to the Boven-Digoel for nearly a year, and one cannot blame him for feeling bitter about it, but I trust that he would have weighed his words, had he seen the photographs

of Belsen and Buchenwald, the sight of which a few months previously had made the whole world shudder. There is, however, no doubt that our Indian Government gave a pitiable display of shortsightedness when in 1935 it subjected a man like Sjahrir to banishment. Old sins avenge themselves.

It is perfectly true that in the villages we exercised our rule through the medium of the Javanese nobility, but I deny that the government's purpose in so doing was to "keep the people backward". Our Residents and Governors were honestly convinced that by this means they were serving the people. It was the very men in our local government who had pledged their hearts to this country who hesitated to break the traditional link between the *desa*-man and his respected *wedono* and regent and to offend his sense of propriety by doing away with the ancient laws and all the other customs handed down from father to son and replacing them with the western moral code and a modern social structure. At the same time they did their best to safeguard the people against the age-old abuses which were likewise linked with this government by the nobility.

But to continue, Sjahrir warns his people that by persisting in their medieval ways of thought and feeling they are their own enemy—an enemy which should be constantly watched, "for if we were not careful, we might become victims of the feudalism which is still rooted in us and which expresses itself in nationalism and eventually makes fascists of us". As a fatal example of this, he states that the two European dictators, in order to carry out their criminal plans, first made an appeal to the instincts of feudalism and nationalism in the masses; he mentions also Franco and Chiang Kai-shek and speaks of the danger that can lurk in a short-lived success of fascist methods.

He sums up:

"It is therefore plain that our movement must find its leadership in a revolutionary democratic group, and not in nationalists, who have bowed like slaves before the fascists—be it Dutch colonial fascism or Japanese military fascism. Our first task in our revolutionary democratic struggle is to wipe out the stain of Japanese fascism and thereby set an example to the nation, which is still under the influence of Japanese propaganda. Men who have sold their souls to fascist

Japan must be cast out by our revolution. Men who have worked in the service of Japanese propaganda or for the Japanese secret service are traitors to our revolution. We must mould our Republic into an instrument to be used in our democratic struggle for freedom and thus purge it of all the remnants of Japanese fascism."

The document continues in this strain with a tendency to repetition, as I have said before, which makes it impossible to quote it in full. I have here and there run sentences together and hope that by so doing I have not prejudiced the argument for European readers. Towards the end Sjahrir puts forward some practical proposals, such as the building up of a well-disciplined modern army, which, however, must not be imbued with militaristic and nationalistic ideals, but must have a full understanding of its task; the soldier is merely a pioneer for the worker. When once the people, through the good example of the government and the Youth Army, are infused with the true democratic spirit, race-hatred will disappear spontaneously, and the bloody excesses will come to a natural end.

* * *

This in many respects courageous pamphlet aroused our curiosity as to its author. We discovered a Dollfuss of the Revolution, a man of perhaps forty, with the figure of a boy and with a pleasant, gentle manner. He did not appear to be in the least apprehensive as to the outcome of his criticism of the Republican leaders and the so greatly feared *pemoedas*.

The names of Soekarno and Mohamad Hatta appeared nowhere in the document, but they rose involuntarily in the reader's mind. It was known about Hatta that it was only after long hesitation and with secret repugnance that he had agreed to the Japanese proposals of co-operation; he is said to have complained to his friends afterwards that he was now "a bird in a gilded cage". But Soekarno had collaborated from the outset without hesitation, indeed, even with alacrity. He was the man who helped the occupying power to obtain Indonesian slave labour. And as early as April 29th, 1943, in a speech on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday, he let the world know that

(with Japan's help) he intended to flatten out England and bash America to bits with a crowbar. He delivered fiery orations at the public burning of the effigies of Roosevelt and Churchill and congratulated Laurel, President, by the grace of the Japanese, of the Philippines, on his declaration of war against America. At a disastrously late date, namely, on May 14th, 1945, he still praised the heroic courage of the German people under their leader, Hitler.

To give some idea of Soekarno's oratorical style, I quote a few sentences from a speech delivered at a propaganda meeting in Batavia on the 16th April, 1944:

"As we already know, America is a country which loves to exaggerate its own wealth and its own contribution to the war. But, comrades, within one week America had surrendered and anyone who still had the chance took to his heels. Comrades, this is clear proof that the Americans were bluffing when they boasted of their strength to the peoples of Asia.

"Our morale, which suffered under the oppression of the Allies, has at last awakened from its slumber, and as true Indonesian fighters, we are going to drive the enemy out of Indonesia forthwith. Be assured, comrades, ultimate victory belongs to the Japanese who stood by us and invited us to co-operate with them in the salvation of Asia. Right is, therefore, on the side of Japan, as I have often explained to you before. And this is a guarantee that we too shall be the victors. But, comrades, even if the Japanese should be beaten, *we* will not lose courage, nor will we abandon the fight in defence of our beloved fatherland, Indonesia, even if it means our destruction. We shall not lightly surrender; on the contrary, our enemies will have to subject themselves to us, the people of Asia."

Soekarno certainly made no secret of his collaboration with Japan. The presentation of his arguments is not quite convincing and does not compare too favourably with that of his premier-to-be, but it certainly reveals the born stump-orator, who relies on his conviction that it is not easy to rate the intellectual level of his listeners too low.

Meanwhile we journalists were eagerly awaiting events, for

Sjahrir's publication was very much like an open declaration of war on the Soekarno government. That the man whom he had so unmistakably accused of collaboration should in less than a fortnight have chosen him as his premier was surprising enough in itself, but what we understood still less was that the author of *Our Struggle* should have consented to take office in a government of which Soekarno remained President. We could only regard it as a temporary compromise. Shortly before his election, we had heard a rumour that Sjahrir was considering two possibilities—either to stand aloof until people should have completely lost faith in their present leaders and the moment was rife for a palace revolution, or to accept a portfolio in Soekarno's government and make an attempt to split the government from within. Now he was in a position to form a new cabinet himself, but under the President and the Vice-President, who, in the terms of his own document, had been "traitors to the Republic and satellites of Japan".

It was not difficult to understand a compromise on the part of a man like Soekarno. His decision was regarded as an adroit move, for would not the choice of such a premier help to wipe out his sins of the past, indicating that he had recovered his democratic principles? But in the case of Sjahrir we were confronted with a riddle. Had he given up waiting as hopeless?

For a time we hoped that he and the young idealists who worked with him would be able to win over the people at the cost of "Boeng Karno's" popularity, but we very soon realised that we had under-estimated the latter's power and astuteness and that the new premier had a titanic struggle to face before he could hope to win over a people so fundamentally perverted by Japanese and nationalist propaganda. For the masses Soekarno was still the father of the movement, and in his radio speeches, which enabled him continually to incite his *pemoedas* to renewed fanatic nationalism and race-hatred, he was easily able to drown the gentler tones of the pedagogue Sjahrir. It is always more rewarding to work on the emotions than to appeal to reason.

In yet another way Sjahrir found himself at a disadvantage compared with his President in the eyes of the people. He and his right-hand man (Sjarifoeddin) came from Sumatra; Soekarno

was a Javanese. Among the inhabitants of the archipelago the Sumatrans have a reputation for intelligence and energy; the Javanese is a mystic, a dreamer, and does not care to fatigue himself with concentrated thinking. Soekarno knew how to appeal to his Javanese; he knew all their instincts, because the same instincts were in his own blood, and he succeeded in becoming for them the symbol of freedom, the freedom which not so long ago he himself had trampled underfoot. He took a new, young wife and promoted her to be "*Iboe Indonesia*"—Mother of Indonesia; she accompanied him on his triumphal propaganda tours, and her loveliness was enough to convince the people that "Boeng Karno" must be right in everything. His—for a Javanese—rather stout figure expressed the manly strength which once contributed so much to Mussolini's and Göring's popularity; his speech was accompanied by vigorous, expressive gestures, and he had a way of working himself up to an oratorical climax, culminating in a passionate, hoarse cry of "*Merdeka*", which was echoed by a thousand throats.

It is an easy formula for anyone who knows its secret and has no scruples in applying it. And who was there among Soekarno's naïve listeners who could or would dare to refute his accusations against the white "enemies and oppressors of Indonesia"?



The first Dutch-Indonesian conference, which took place on the evening of November 17th in Allied Headquarters, served to disclose how limited was the power of the new cabinet. General Christison, the Allied Commander-in-Chief, was in the chair, and my memory still retains a vivid picture of this meeting, although the press were only allowed to see the beginning and the end of it.

The Dutch representatives and one or two English mediators waited upstairs while the Indonesian delegation made a slow and rather solemn ascent of the marble staircase, despatch-cases under their arms and visibly impressed by the importance of this first official mission. When the two groups confronted each other there was something unintentionally grotesque in the scene—they might have been denizens of different planets. For it so happened that the white members of this conference, begin-

ning with the giant Christison, were almost without exception over six foot, whereas Sjahrir's Indonesian delegates, every one of them, had the boyish figure of their premier. For the rest, the greetings were exceptionally cordial, the Dutch found personal friends among the Indonesians, and they all seemed pleased to see one another. The press photographers clicked their cameras and then the doors were closed.

Expectations in Batavia ran high. At a press conference shortly before this meeting took place Van Mook had expressed his satisfaction with the new cabinet, whose members were sensible, energetic men, with whom it was easier to talk than with opportunists who had forfeited their honour under the Japanese occupation, or with fanatics who attached more importance to the immediate fulfilment of their political ideals than to the amelioration of the present distress of the people. We had heard that the discussions were likely to end at midnight or thereabouts, and as it neared that time, I and one or two other journalists went to have another look. But the doors were still closed on us, so we passed the time in conversation with the obviously bored sergeant on guard at the door. When we asked him what he thought of Javanese politics and, in particular, of this conference, he gave us an emphatic answer which I will refrain from repeating here.

At last the gentlemen round the green table rose, but they had not progressed a single step. The bulky despatch-cases of the Indonesian delegates apparently contained not one single practical proposal, and even the power this first deputation symbolised proved to be a mere semblance; Sjahrir and his men calmly declared that they had no authority to pledge themselves to anything. The Dutch had hoped that the Republican delegation, even though they did not wish to bind themselves in any way politically, at any rate would be ready to come to some sort of arrangement for economic co-operation, so that the experts of both parties could put their heads together. But every proposal in this direction was rejected with the perpetually repeated excuse that the new cabinet had not yet had time for consultation and study of the problems.

A delegation which turned up at a meeting without the barest proposal and unable to accept the slightest responsibility was a phenomenon which the English were quite unable to grasp.

And this completely negative attitude seemed to them the more reprehensible because Sjahrir had particularly asked for a postponement of this conference, which originally was to have been held a few days earlier.

If the English and Dutch representatives were disappointed, Sjahrir and his colleagues, accustomed to the Eastern tempo in negotiations, asserted their satisfaction with the meeting "which had produced illumination on so many important points". Pressed by the English, the Indonesian delegates, after some hesitation, at length expressed themselves ready to attend a further conference, which it was arranged to hold five days later.

Even at that date we were beginning to fear that many more, indeed very many more, discussions would be necessary before any result could be hoped for. All the Westerners became slowly but surely demented from the dilatory way in which the negotiations proceeded. We thought of the distress in the interior and asked ourselves how long this state of affairs could be allowed to continue. But we under-estimated the patience and endurance of this nation.

Sjahrir would have liked to act more quickly, but gradually it became clear even to the blindest that he would first have to fight a political battle within the government before he could do anything for his people. From now on Soekarno was seldom or never seen in Batavia; he chose to take up his residence in the interior, in the midst of his nationalist Youth Army, and while he was away playing the part of liberator of the Fatherland, Sjahrir was left to deal with all the troublesome, thankless tasks in Batavia.

However, we all felt that this little, fearless man was not likely to give up the battle until he had attained the goal he had set himself. One day, we were convinced, the Sjahrir-Soekarno compromise must come to an end.



I had been promised by a young Dutch airman that he would take me to Surabaya the first time an opportunity offered, but it ended in his taking me with him on a flight to Sumatra, since he had unexpectedly been commissioned to go there to find out

if there were any Japanese transport planes on the island which could be used for Rapwi work in Java.

Our own flight, it seemed, was to be in a Japanese machine, which was tucked away among the heavier-built Mitchells, Thunderbolts and Dakotas on the Batavian airfield at Kemajoran. Since the surrender it had been painted white with a green Rapwi cross above the red Nippon sun. Standing beside the aircraft waited two bespectacled little Japs, who saluted us with amiable smiles; hanging down from their caps behind was the dirty bit of rag used to protect the Japanese neck against the Indian sun.

One of the two seated himself as reserve pilot in the second steering-seat, making an amazing pair with the tall, broad-shouldered Dutchman beside him; the other, as soon as we had taken off, threw himself on his knees and began to pull a lever backwards and forwards with all his strength—a proceeding which he repeated later on before we landed, and which intrigued me somewhat until I discovered that our machine was not provided with a hydraulic pump for drawing up and letting down the wheels.

Whatever other defects it may have had, it succeeded, lurching and jolting and at intervals sinking into air-pockets, in working its way unharmed through an electric storm which forced the Dakota, which had set out a quarter of an hour after us with passengers for Singapore, to turn back. I can't say I felt particularly comfortable up there, when suddenly at seven in the morning we were plunged into the blackness of night, but I tried not to fall short of the two Japs, both of whom radiated calm confidence. And, once we had weathered the storm, everything proceeded perfectly. Down below the blue bay of Telokbetong came into sight, and then the swampy jungle of East Sumatra, the widespread field of "curly-kale", through which slimy brown rivers sluggishly wind their way down to the sea.

On the airfield at Palembang we found the usual waiting group of ex-internees, with which I had become familiar in Java. The same shabby clothes, flapping loosely about emaciated bodies; the same pallid faces with the fixed expression which was the result of the long, long waiting in the camps. Only exceptionally strong, ascetic natures were victorious in the battle against deprivation and sickness and emerged spiritually and physically

steeled from the ordeal. Such examples of physical vigour were tired of waiting; now that their camp was thrown open they could not bear to waste another moment lounging about and staring into space. They wanted to get to work, the sooner the better, and the slow pace at which things were moving filled them with passionate indignation. They wanted to fight for the rehabilitation of Indonesia, if necessary with weapons in their hands. There was no danger that could intimidate *them* after all they had gone through.

It stands to reason that among those who had kept their health unimpaired there were many Eurasians, children of the country, who were not so easily beaten by the climate. They thought they could see the way to make an end of the chaos in the shortest possible time and with the smallest number of victims. They understood the Indonesian and his weaknesses; the same weaknesses were inherent in their own blood. Our Western ethic merely irritated them; they regarded it as moonshine and believed that the outcome would be only more distress and endless bloodshed. "We must have a strong hand, sir, and very soon too, or everything will be chaos. How can the people of this country suddenly govern themselves when they've never done it before? Especially now, when the Japs have brought things to such a pass! We can't understand, none of us can understand, why Soekarno wasn't made short work of straight away. You should just have heard all the things he had to say about England when we were under the Japanese. And now the English let him go free. Don't they realise that the people just laugh at them? The people say: the *Inggris* are afraid to touch our Boeng Karno! That's the way they talk, and, of course, they shout hurray when he comes lording it in a grand motor-car with police on motor-cycles riding on either side, or, even better in the Governor-General's saloon car! Look at our Boeng Karno. There he is in his state car, exactly like the *Toewan Besar Belanda* (the Governor-General), but he eats his rice with his fingers just like us! You see, sir, they feel as though they were in the car themselves. What does it matter then if they have nothing to fill their bellies with or have to share their last whole jacket and sarong between three of them? . . . Here in Sumatra you'll see some pretty things! The rights of the Republic have to be respected; very well, so everything remains

in the hands of their lordships the Indonesians, who hoist a red-and-white flag over it, and then the goods can lie and rot, for all they care. The big plantations, which the Japs kept going, have been put in charge of the former *kranis* and *toekangs*" (Indonesian clerks and overseers). "What's the result? Anything that can possibly be dragged away disappears. I don't say that the *kranis* are thieves; there's nothing they'd like better than to hand over the machines at once, in working order, to their former masters, so as to be able to earn something again. But they have no authority; they daren't do anything to stop the plunderers, who come armed with lances and *parangs*. So the country's going to rack and ruin, simply through inertness and fine talk. If only they would let us Indos" (the East Indian word for Eurasians) "have weapons and give us a free hand! With the help of the Amboynese we'd clean things up in Java in three months! And once we'd throttled that damned Radio-Djocjakarta, things in Sumatra would calm down of themselves."

This was the way the Eurasians talked, and other ex-internees too. While they were in the camps, it had never occurred to them that the world would have changed in those few years, and they regarded this Indonesian revolution merely as something artificial, a devilish Japanese machination, against which not only their wives and children in Java, but eventually the whole Indonesian nation had to be protected. . . .

In the afternoon we flew on to Padang, on Sumatra's west coast, where for the last two or three days the curfew had been imposed, following a foul attack by Nationalists on a house containing twenty-five unarmed Eurasian men, women and children, all of whom had been butchered. There was a good deal of uneasiness in the town, but the English considered the anxiety exaggerated and were not worried at the prospect of being unable to defend the inhabitants against an attack from outside; they felt confident that they could rely on the co-operation of the twenty-fifth Japanese Army—sixty thousand strong—which was still responsible for peace and order in Sumatra. Mohamad Hassan, the Republican Governor, was a reasonable man—perhaps a little *too* reasonable for the taste of the Javanese extremists, who three weeks previously had sent over some hundred agitators to stir things up. These agitators had spread themselves over various centres such as Padang, Fort de Cock

and Pajakoemboeh, and their efforts had not been unrewarded. Native servants were suddenly afraid to go to their jobs in the mornings, and the Chinese, in particular, were subjected to boycott and terror and became dubious about working any longer with Rapwi, as they had done so enthusiastically at first.

The degree to which Java was the centre of the revolution became even clearer to me when I visited the other islands at a later date. In Borneo and Celebes everything was peace and harmony until a prahu containing Javanese propagandists came rowing up to the shore. Of course, the wireless had a lot to do with Java's supremacy. The whole of Sumatra, for instance, listened in to the Republican Radio in Djocjakarta and received orders over the ether.

Next to the wireless there is nothing that has done so much to make the world small as the aeroplane. Take, for instance, this immense island of Sumatra, in many places impenetrable, where elephants still roam about in droves and the tiger and the crocodile hold unchallenged sway in their hunting-grounds. The very names of Sumatra's rivers and volcanoes, like those of Borneo, inspired me with awe when, as a boy at school in Batavia, I had to learn them by heart. Now we flew from one end to the other in a few hours. First all along the rocky west coast, reminding me in the grey monsoon atmosphere of a Japanese print; then over Sumatra's backbone, the Barisan range; and again skimming low over the enormous Lake Toba, which stretched gold-sparkling between its sloping shores. Twice we circled around Prapat, where the great Deli plantations had rest bungalows for their staff. In the little yacht harbour sailing-boats still lay at anchor, and rising out of the unruffled water stood the diving-platform and spring-board just as it was when in happier and more peaceful days I used to take a plunge from it myself. And there, too, was the market, with its gruesome display of bloody carcasses of sucking pigs and newly slaughtered dogs, delicacies of the Bataks, round which the flies used to swarm in thousands. It seemed to be in full swing that Saturday morning; on the lake were long, narrow prahus carrying market produce, and the oarsmen drew in their paddles to look up at us.

After Lake Toba the plateau of Karo with its typical Batak villages, characterised by the black roofs of *idjoek* (palm fibre)

which heavily overshadowed the houses, built up on stakes and grouped according to the rules of the ancient rural laws. And finally the tobacco centre of Medan in the province of Deli.

In Medan I heard sad stories about the ruin of the plantations; the factories had been plundered, the fields laid waste. And if only one could get to work again. But a small party of courageous experts, who had recently completed a tour of inspection of the plantations, had discovered to their cost how unsafe it still was in the interior. Two of their group of five had been murdered by the mob at Pematang Siantar.

Even supposing the former employees would have dared to go into the fields again to work "for the whites", they would first have had to be collected together. The half-million or so Javanese contract coolies, who before the war had worked on the Deli plantations, had been carried off almost in their entirety by the enemy to Burma, Borneo and elsewhere, and of those that remained thousands were lying packed like sardines in the former plantation hospitals, suffering from hunger-oedema and from all the diseases one can contract in the tropics. There were no medicines and hardly any doctors, and the Indonesian medical assistants exploited the situation by demanding fees for inoculations (which used to be free and compulsory) running as high as five hundred guilders.

On the evening I spent at the Hotel de Boer in Medan, an orchestra of young Eurasians was playing; there was dancing, chatter and laughter. Not a vacant seat was to be found at any of the tables, and jeeps and army cars were perpetually arriving with officers escorting young women and girls, obviously taking the opportunity to appear in something like an evening dress again. If you discounted the British uniforms, the scene hardly differed from what one used to see on any Saturday evening in better times. But out in the dark night which surrounded the brightly lighted hotel there was danger. The people of the town felt it growing from hour to hour, the thought of it was always at the back of their minds even when, on an evening like this, they tried to put it from them.

Time after time I heard them say: "We are living on the edge of a volcano. How are we to know that, when it comes to the pinch, the Japs won't join hands with the nationalists. As it is Achin" (the residency north of Medan and known for its

fierce, hostile Mohamedanism) "is nothing but a fortified camp, and you can imagine the effect it made out there when Radio-Djocjakarta declared the holy war on the white infidels! It's at our very door, and even here in the town the Achinese are running round with weapons concealed under their clothes. . . ."

My visit to Sumatra was too short for me to give more than a general idea of the atmosphere as I found it. There was the gloom of a hidden menace everywhere in the island, and I was glad, shortly after my journey, to read that the evacuation of women and children from Medan, Padang and Palembang was to be speeded up.

* * *

On my return to Batavia I was offered the chance of going with several other journalists on a flight to the Outer Islands (which we call "the Great East"), and as I was anxious to see more of the archipelago I accepted with alacrity. The invitation came from our Director of Economic Affairs, Mr. Hoogstraten, who had had a Catalina flying-boat put at his disposal for this tour. We were to set off within a few days.

It so happened that it was during those few days that the notorious Bekasi tragedy occurred.

We had heard disquieting rumours in connection with Bekasi even before similar alarming reports about Depok reached our ears. Extremists were holding up trains at Bekasi, and were said to have dragged out Dutch, Eurasian and Amboynese women and children and imprisoned them in the Indonesian police barracks in that town. A Chinese doctor, who had his family out there, told me horrifying tales about the terror to which they were subjected.

I spoke about this to Richard Sharp of the B.B.C., and together we went along to the "Intelligence" Section at British Headquarters. The Brigadier who was at the head of the Section made a note of what we reported to him, and a few days later he took us aside at the end of a press conference to inform us that the situation in Bekasi was "even more interesting" than we suspected. But it would not be possible to send an expedition there until tanks were available.

Meanwhile the rumours of murder and robbery persisted, until even Soekarno became alarmed; he was anxious to prove

to the English that the Republic was capable of maintaining order, and he let it be known that he would go to Bekasi in person and, if necessary, urge the *pemoedas* to hold themselves in hand. A few correspondents, including myself, requested to be allowed to accompany him on this tour of inspection, but we were informed by Soekarno's secretary that the President could not hold himself responsible for the safety of representatives of the press and, therefore, preferred that we should not accompany him. A request made by one or two bold spirits to be allowed to go with him on their own responsibility was likewise refused, and the reports of Soekarno's visit to Bekasi, afterwards boosted into a "triumphant success", came exclusively from the reporters of the Indonesian press; we saw the cars of *Antara* and *Merdeka* return flaunting their red-and-white flags.

For a short time after this Bekasi became the centre of interest in an unexpected manner. A Dakota carrying twenty British-Indian soldiers was obliged to make a forced landing on the rice-fields somewhere in the neighbourhood of Krandji (between Batavia and Bekasi). The pilot of a reconnaissance plane saw the occupants of the Dakota still standing round the machine and concluded, rather prematurely, that everything was all right. A patrol of British-Indian soldiers sent to their assistance later, on arriving at the site of the accident, found nothing but a few hacked-off limbs lying about on the rice-field. In their fury they set fire to the two nearest villages, from which the inhabitants had fled. What exactly happened beside the aircraft and why the Indian soldiers, who must undoubtedly have been armed, should have delivered themselves up to their butchers without making a stand, will probably never be known. News came through from spies shortly afterwards, however, that a group of survivors plus the four members of the English crew of the machine had been taken off to the police barracks at Bekasi. Headquarters hesitated no longer about sending an expedition.

Robert Kiek, whom I had told about the interview Sharp and I had had with "Intelligence", went to see the Brigadier who had spoken to us previously and succeeded in getting his permission for the two of us to accompany the expedition. Sharp was ill in bed at the time.

At half-past five in the morning we had to be at the so-called

"High-School Willem III" in the South of Batavia, where a British-Indian regiment was quartered. As a fourteen-year-old boy I had had the elements of mathematics and English grammar pumped into me in this establishment, and I did what you too would have done in the circumstances—I went to have a look at my old class-room, where the benches had given place to soldiers' camp-beds hung about with mosquito-nets.

What had been announced as a reconnoitring expedition turned out to be a "reconnaissance in force", consisting of a whole battalion of Punjabis and a column of Douglas tanks; even a few field-guns and a couple of heavy Shermans rolled along beside us. Later we discovered the reason for this display of strength: R.A.F. scouts had observed from the air that the former Dutch fortifications at Krandji, which once formed part of Batavia's defences, were manned by *pemoedas*. I now realised both what it was the Brigadier of "Intelligence" had found so interesting and why it had been necessary to await the arrival of tanks before proceeding to Bekassi.

We had our own car and drove with the convoy as far as the outskirts of Krandji, where a halt was made, and the guns were brought into position along either side of the road. Brigadier King, who was in charge of the expedition, told us that a column of tanks was to set out from this spot, break through the *pemoedas'* lines and press on to Bekassi. If we waited here, we should get first-hand news in due course.

We had hoped, however, to be able to get our own impressions of conditions in the police barracks at Bekassi and asked, therefore, whether we might not accompany the column; we had come, we pointed out, not only to hear, but above all to *see*. After a little consideration our request was granted. The tanks were just rolling away and we had to hurry to catch up with the last of them.

It was the first time—and I trust it will prove to have been the last, too—that I had ever climbed on to a moving tank. The fact that the monster had been standing for the past quarter of an hour roasting in the tropical sun did not make the feat any easier; the steel was so hot that it scorched our hands. We crept up behind the conning-tower and held fast by the rope that was festooned all round it.

We had hardly settled ourselves when an Indian head emerged

from the tower and enquired rather peevishly what we thought we were doing. We explained that we had permission from the Brigadier, but this, it seemed, did not make us any more popular. A little later, when the foremost tanks were held up by machine-gun-fire and a few rumbles of shell-fire could be heard through the stillness of the Indian morning, the Punjabi sergeant found a good excuse to get rid of us. He said: "Get off, please, you are drawing fire with your light khaki stuff."

Since not a single shot had yet fallen in our direction, the accusation that we were drawing the enemy's fire, seemed to us a feeble excuse to get rid of us, but in order to reassure the man we jumped down and hoisted ourselves on to a wireless van, where there was less antagonism to the press and we were made welcome and treated to cold coffee.

Every five hundred yards or so the road was barricaded with piled up sods of grass, but the sight of the tanks rolling up appeared to be too much for the *pemoedas*; from a long way off we could see them fleeing right and left into the rice-fields, after, in some cases, putting up a slight show of resistance.

The clearing away of these barricades, however, held us up, and still more time was lost in removing the charge from several land-mines and blowing up pill-boxes, which it was thought better not to leave intact.

We drove through the two burnt-out villages, a scene of desolation. Here and there a house had been spared by the flames, and, entering one of these, we saw the food still standing on the stove. On the table lay a case of Japanese ammunition, and a duck, tethered by one leg, was fluttering about the room in a state of mortal terror. I went back later to cut the rope, and in this way, at any rate, contribute something to the liberation of Indonesia.

A deserted world. Along the road an occasional abandoned cart. In the covered market of Krاندji the wares were still spread out; anyone who liked could buy without payment; there must have been a panic flight from the spot. A dog-cart, used for carrying fruit, was piled high with red, hairy *ramboetans*, and the ill-balanced load almost lifted the wretched animal between the shafts right off the ground; the harness was cutting into its belly. Probably the driver had acted as a counter-weight, but he had disappeared.

At every side-turning one or two tanks stayed behind on guard, and we had only a small column left when we halted outside the little station to the extreme west of Bekasi. Here the road forked, and we were faced with the question whether we ought to turn to the right or to the left. A signpost that had been thrown into the ditch, however, gave us an immediate answer; it was stood upright with one arm pointing to "Betawi" (Batavia); another arm then indicated that the right turn would bring us to our destination.

At Krاندji we had been warned that several hundred *pemoedas* had left there in great haste for Bekasi, where they hoped to find adequate reinforcements to enable them to bar the way of the tanks to the police barracks. This plan, if it had ever existed, appeared, however, to have been abandoned, for, with the exception of three peacefully grazing goats, who looked up haughtily and unperturbed at our approach, there was not a living soul to be seen in the vicinity of the police barracks, and the only thing to bar our way was an insignificant barbed-wire enclosure.

A board inscribed "Military police" showed us that we had reached our destination. We jumped down from the tanks and took cover behind the lovely old kanari trees, which stood around the building. The English major, who led the column, was the first to enter the enclosure, armed with a revolver and followed by half a dozen soldiers on foot. Had they left a trap for us inside? No, the police had apparently fled, and the shrieks that followed on the kicking open of the door in the gateway came from a few Amboynese women, whose only anxiety was to convince the major as he forced his way in that they had nothing to do with the police or the *pemoedas*. "*Tawan! Kami tawan sadja!*—we are only prisoners," they cried, raising their hands as if they had been ordered to put them up. And watching, with hysterical terror in their eyes, the soldiers who rushed past them to search the barracks, they sobbed and pleaded for their lives: "*Minta ampoen, toewan! Minta ampoen!*—Have mercy on us!"

The major's only concern was to know if they could tell him anything about the men from the Dakota, but the women were too nervous as yet to grasp what we were asking. "We were dragged out of the train by the *pemoedas*, sir! We wanted to

go to Batavia because we had heard that our husbands had been released from the Japanese camps, but then those fellows came along! We had done nothing wrong, nothing at all, and yet they kicked and beat us and locked us up here! They took away our clothes, too, and only gave us a few rags instead!"

At last one of the women realised what was wanted of her: "The soldiers and the English officers from the aeroplane? Yes, sir, they were here! They were brought here from Oedjoeng Menteng, and then . . ."

Her voice broke, and she looked at us with big eyes, hesitant. "Allah, those *pemoedas*, sir! They murdered them. . . ."

The others nodded silently as they listened with bated breath.

I translated this for the major, who, however, had already understood and merely asked: "Where did it happen?"

"*Di-mana itoe?*"

"It must have been just behind the barracks, sir. We could hear it in here. . . ."

"How many were there?"

"About twenty."

"Were there any white officers?"

"Yes, sir, four young English officers. And all the people from Bekassi came to look on when they were executed. Our warders went out, too. We were left quite alone. But the gate was locked and we couldn't run away. . . ."

What she had told us proved later to be the truth. During her examination in Batavia on the following day she repeated her story, and when a punitive expedition was sent out afterwards, it was this same woman who showed them the way to the spot on the river-bank where—after some digging in the tropical midday sun—the horribly mutilated bodies were discovered.

"Do you know anything about any white women and children who were brought here, like you, from the train?" I asked her.

"Yes, sir, they were shut up there." She led us to a cell towards the back of the building, and added: "But a few days ago the *pemoedas* fetched them away again and took them somewhere else."

"Where?"

"All the way to Tjikampek, sir. At least that's what our warders said."

The cell door stood ajar and we cast a look round the empty space. For all those we had hoped to save the expedition had arrived too late.

Meanwhile the soldiers had begun breaking open with the butts of their rifles various cells, where, according to the woman, there were still Indonesian and Chinese prisoners. If this was the case, they must have been rendered dumb by fear, for not a sound penetrated to us from within. When the first door flew open, we found, huddled in a corner, a group of men with grey faces, who now came hesitatingly forward. There seemed to be three or four Chinamen among them; for the rest, they were Indonesians. A few of them showed on their thin naked backs a pattern of weals like a fish's backbone; these weals had festered into terrible wounds, and in some cases even laid bare their ribs.

Why had they been imprisoned here? Were these men "*mata-mata moesoeh*"—"spies of the Dutch, or were they captured thieves and murderers? They looked at us helplessly, shivering all over, hardly able to speak. The Amboynese woman, who by now had completely recovered her self-confidence, began eagerly to plead their innocence. They too, she told us, were only imprisoned because they had the ill-luck to be in disgrace with the *pemoedas*, who behaved just like madmen if you didn't do what they wanted immediately.

The major put them all together, with a view to taking them to Batavia to give evidence, but the poor devils did not realise this and seemed to expect nothing less than a firing-squad; I became aware of this when I saw the Amboynese woman go up to them of her own accord and try to reassure them. Once they grasped that their fears were unwarranted, their faces cleared up, but now they began to worry about their clothes and other objects which had been taken from them by the *pemoedas* and which, they asserted, must be shut up in a closet beside the kitchen. They asked—and got—permission to go and fetch their possessions and began to sort out their miserable belongings.

The police barracks were situated in the town square, and while the soldiers were searching the office, breaking open desks and collecting documents, I went with the major to the neighbouring building occupied by the Indonesian Red Cross. A little group of Javanese in European dress were now collected in the small vestibule; they must previously have been hidden in-

side and were probably the only people left behind in the little town, which, otherwise, gave the impression of complete desolation. They were the orderlies and the chief of the local Red Cross, and that they had had the courage to trust in the inviolability of their flag was a relief in the midst of the barbarism, which in course of time one was to come to regard as normal.

We put to them the same question we had asked the Amboynese woman—did they know anything about the occupants of the Dakota and about any white women and children who had been imprisoned in the police barracks. In gentle, cultivated voices they tried to make us believe that they knew nothing of one or the other. They had heard nothing at all about the white women and children who were said to have been imprisoned here. True, the wireless had announced something about an aeroplane, which was said to have landed in the rice-fields, but that was the extent of their knowledge.

Did they fear the vengeance of the *pemoedas* if they were to betray anything about the slaughter, which must have taken place almost opposite their Red Cross post? Was it "loyalty" to the Republic and to their nation which sealed their lips? We turned away without pressing the point and left them.

I made an attempt to persuade the major to drive on to Tjikampek. It was only later that I saw on the map that it was half-way to Bandung, but, even supposing it had been nearer, the major could not have agreed to my proposal, which must have sounded very naïve in his ears. He told me there was nothing he would like better, but his orders were explicit and limited, and he could not depart from them. Indeed, it was time to turn back, since his mission—to penetrate into the police barracks at Bekassi—was accomplished and it was getting on for four o'clock—in two hours' time it would be dark.

The liberated prisoners, men and women, seemed to have only one fear now—that they might be left behind. As soon as a lorry drove up to collect them, they all began to clamber in at the same time, pushing each other over in their eagerness. When there really was no more room for anyone to hang on, the rest climbed on to the tanks, and it was a strange procession that rolled back to Krandji.

On the way we joined up with the tanks which had been

detailed to guard the cross-roads, and at our base in Krاندji we found everyone ready to move on. While a few last pillboxes were being hurriedly blown up, a little, terrified horse came into sight, dragging its cart behind it; it must have taken fright at the sound of the shooting and bolted. A young English lieutenant, seeing the animal was covered with terrible sores, caused by the badly-fitting harness and festering fly-bites, could not bear to think of the animal falling into the hands of such a heartless owner again and finished it off with his revolver. The little horse, which had watched his approach with mistrust, sank down without a sound, and that was the end of this particular military operation, which, so far as I know, involved no other casualties.

Two days later, on Saturday, December 1st, a new expedition set out for Bekassi, and the horrible business of the digging up of the corpses took place. Half an hour later the Indonesian quarter was on fire, and the flames of vengeance sent their reflection far beyond Java, calling forth a storm of indignation in the democratic world. But it was the Chinese who had to pay the heaviest price for the massacre of the four and twenty men from the Dakota. When they returned to Bekassi they found that *their* houses were the only ones which had been spared. The *pemoedas* drew their own conclusions from this rather strange Allied protection and turned over the Chinese quarter to plunder. It ended in more than plunder. . . .

One thing gradually became plain to the English in Java: once having penetrated into a locality, you had to stay. If you withdrew, then innocent and defenceless people paid the penalty for any Allied military action which had taken place.

I cannot give a first-hand account of the second expedition. I did not want to miss the tour of the Outer Islands, and the Catalina flying-boat in which we were to make our journey was to leave on the same Saturday morning. So I was spared the experience of seeing the disinterment of semi-decomposed bodies and limbs. The photographs which I saw afterwards were quite enough for me. It was many a long day before some of my colleagues who were present were able to forget the sight.

* * *

On the first day we flew to Balikpapan, twice razed to the

ground—by the Dutch in January, 1942, and once again, three years later, by the Japanese. This great, oil-producing centre on the east coast of Borneo was reduced to a ghost town, a nightmare of twisted rusty steel, blackened palm stumps and bomb-craters filled with petroleum. After the liberation a number of wooden huts had been erected for the white employees of the Batavian Petroleum Company and former coolies as well as for numerous women and children, who were aimlessly swarming about in this wilderness awaiting transport to Java. The melancholy carcasses of factories, sheds, electric power-stations were infused with a gruesome life when the red glow of the sinking sun shone through the framework of crumpled iron and seemed to provide these gloomy monsters with bloodshot eyes. This madman's phantasmagoria was continued beneath the water; on the bottom of the shallow sea lay—apart from lighters, cranes, boilers, petrol-drums—a bizarre collection of lorries, saloon cars and motor-boats, all half-buried in the sand; and shoals of little fish swam in and out of the windows of these submarine vehicles, while crabs crawled sideways over their roofs.

The next day Macassar in South Celebes—a sad return for me, remembering the delightful, gay town it once had been. The Rotterdam Fortress was still there with its red roofs and seventeenth-century gables, but it looked disconsolate in its filth and neglect. And the harbour! Nowhere in the archipelago had there been a busier and more picturesque harbour than that of Macassar. A motley, floating caravanserai for the Great East. I could remember the water so crowded with junks and sampans and Buginese and Madurese prahus that one could jump from deck to deck and reach the farther quayside without wetting a foot. I have stood for an hour at a time watching the homely scene—cooking and drying nets, driving bargains and abusing one another, scraping fish and getting dressed and shaven, all on the shifting floor of this village of ever-changing aspect, where incoming and outgoing ships could only nose their way through with much tacking and hooting, sometimes at the cost of a broken bowsprit or a battered dinghy. Now the harbour was empty, enveloped in the stillness of a perished world. An Australian soldier standing guard over a few half-burnt-out sheds, gazed at me in amazement, wondering what I could find to look at in this bit of water and a couple of deserted quays. . . .

It was certainly quiet and safe in Macassar; the *pemoëdas* had been active there at one time, and had succeeded for a short period in cutting off the supply of food to the town. But when famine threatened there was a protest from the Indonesian population itself, prompted by their leaders, and after this moral defeat the young nationalists made no further move. Faith in the Dutch had not been completely lost here; concord reigned and there was a co-operative spirit of which the people felt the benefit.

I managed to persuade Noel Monks of the *Daily Mail* and another English correspondent in our party to join me in accompanying the young controleur (district officer) of the little town of Paré-Paré (who had come to Macassar for a meeting with some officials on our plane) on the return journey to his station. The Catalina was to pick us up again in Paré-Paré.

We drove in a couple of jeeps through the remarkable scenery of Maros and Tanette, with its shaggy hills which pop up out of the plain like wild, unshaven heads. Nothing had changed since I had last made this same journey. We encountered many friendly faces in the villages, and sometimes hands were raised to wave a welcome to the controleur. In Java I had learnt the relative value of such popularity; still this reception did us good.

The controleur spoke of the future with much faith and enthusiasm. Difficulties existed to be overcome. If only he could import some clothes and other necessities. The people had not enough to eat, and the rice hoarders in the interior would only open their barns if they were offered goods instead of money, because at the moment there was nothing they could buy with it. Only to think that during the war our government had made purchases totalling millions of guilders so as to be able to relieve distress as soon as it arose, and now the Australian dockers (for the good of Indonesia!) had decided to hold these goods back!

The little coast resort of Paré-Paré again seemed to have suffered terribly from modern mechanised warfare. Once, ten years previously, I had sat in an old-fashioned East Indian rocking-chair in the lounge of the Paré-Paré club, and I can still remember the peaceful picture of geese grazing under the rain trees with their wide spreading branches. Framed by the trees, the little cargo-boat which had brought me lay under steam,

swaying lightly on the gentle swell of the colourless Indian mid-day sea, sending a column of black smoke up into the absolute stillness of the sunlit sky. It seemed then as though a thousand years could bring no change to Paré-Paré, except that from time to time another onlooker would take my place in the rocking-chair to struggle against a languor that allowed of no concentrated thought and made even day-dreaming into a strenuous occupation. Now quietly vegetating, timeless Paré-Paré had had to feel the rough hand of time. Along the water-front, where houses had stood staring sleepily across the sea, goats were clambering about ruins overgrown with weeds, and under the rain trees Australian soldiers camped in tents, listening to the boogy-woogy on their wireless sets or going boating in rubber dinghies.

The Catalina descended into a cradle of glittering white splashing water to pick us up, and within half an hour we were mounting again, and through the dripping port-hole we could just catch sight of the controleur and his gallant young wife, who was staying behind with him, as they stood on the little pier waving us good-bye.

It seemed almost impossible that he would be able successfully to accomplish the task he had undertaken. Not only had he to begin from the very beginning, rebuilding and reorganising, but what guarantee had he that he would not be struggling against the stream, against overwhelming powers of which he could have no conception in remote Paré-Paré? But perhaps Java had made me faint-hearted. He, in any case, was setting out with the faith of youth; in the little bit of Indonesia for which he was responsible he would do his best and was determined to see nothing that lay beyond the scope of his own vision.

And, after all, is not that the method which again and again has led to great and far-reaching results?

We flew over the little harbour of Donggala, where the widest part of Celebes begins to narrow into the mountain chain which forms the northern offshoot of the island. We saw the Dutch colours flying from a flagstaff, and the populace waved to our aircraft which bore the same red-white-and-blue beneath its wings.

The Gulf of Tomini. Then Gorontalo and "Holland's

Twelfth Province", the Minahassa in North Celebes. We came down at Tondano. The hotel in this beautifully situated spot seemed to be filled with ex-internees—men, women and children. Here they had real peace, and it could be seen in their faces. We spent the day there, just long enough for a country walk and a motor-trip to the harbour town of Manado, where again we found the familiar, melancholy scene of demolished houses. When will there ever be an end?

Then on via Ternate and Halmaheira to Morotai, where we landed the next evening. For a long time the Americans have had their headquarters at Morotai, and this forsaken little island of the Northern Moluccas hardly recognises itself since 1943. From the air we could see wide motor-roads, car-parks, canteens, a huge ultra-modern airfield with runways nearly a mile long. In Morotai everyone had his own jeep, and no one knew what to do with the long rows of fighters and bombers; indeed, it had even been whispered that you could become the lucky owner of a one-seater plane for a mere song.

We were put up in a Dutch camp and that evening we had dinner with government officials and officers of our little post-war army, which had fought under MacArthur. Beer was served from the Frigidaire and there was no lack of our native Bols; electric fans whirled; life seemed very pleasant here. We slept on camp-beds in airy huts, and the sea came up so near to the door that I could hear the breaking of the waves and the ripple of the water as it slid back over the shingly beach. Moreover, there was a full moon that night, and who, in such circumstances, could have stayed in bed? On the open veranda I found others sitting, smoking a cigarette to keep off the few mosquitoes which had survived the intensive D.D.T. campaign carried out by the Americans. Coconut palms rose slender and dark against the glittering, whispering infinity of sea and sky. After chatting for a while about politics in Europe and out here, about Shaw and Gandhi, about atomic energy, we eventually went to bed, but by sunrise were up again for the morning dip in the Pacific.

At dinner one of the subjects of conversation had been the Sultan of Ternate, whose pre-war yacht had been sunk by the Allies, probably mistaking it for a Japanese vessel. To replace it a motor-boat was now to be sent to him from Morotai, so that

for the first time in years he could make a cruise through his island realm. I had known the Sultan in the past and I remembered in particular a visit my wife and I had paid to him. Sitting on the veranda of his hillside *kraton*, refreshed by the lovely sea-breeze, we could see, gleaming above the sparkling blue water, the purple mountains of Halmaheira. I knew that Mohamad Iskander Djabid Sjah was an enlightened and charming prince and I conceived the notion of forgoing the rest of the tour by air, going to the Sultan and frankly asking his permission to accompany him on this first post-war cruise through the archipelago over which his ancestors had ruled for so many centuries.

I asked my colleagues whether they felt inclined to make this change of programme. The two Englishmen feared that it might not be easy to get back from Ternate to Batavia, from which town—as correspondents of daily papers—they could not be absent too long. But my plan appealed immediately to the romantic mind of Leonard Huizinga, a young Dutch author and friend of mine, who was also one of our party. He decided to join me, so the two of us remained behind, trusting to our lucky stars, while the rest continued the flight to Amboyna and New Guinea.

The motor-boat for the Sultan was not due to go to Ternate until the Friday evening, which meant that we had more than a whole day to amuse ourselves in Morotai. We had heard a lot about the plague of wild boars which was said to be infesting the island; it was hardly possible to take a step in the jungle, we were told, without hearing a "*tjèleng*" snorting among the bushes. This being the position, we decided to try our luck as hunters. But I shall not bore you with the adventures of our rather humiliating expedition. Let it suffice to say that when we left Morotai the plague still reigned unabated. . . .

One little incident in this day on Morotai: hitherto, apart from Australians and Dutchmen, we had only seen coolies, who might have hailed from any part of the archipelago. Now, for the first time, on a deserted stretch of shore, we encountered some real, primitive Morotai-islanders. Even they had not been left untouched by the war; they had it to thank for strong American army tents and aluminium cooking utensils; in one of the tents there was even a wireless set, probably only used

as an ornament now, since the battery must long since have run down. Amongst the narrow outrigger-prahus lying on the beach was the petrol-tank of an aircraft which had been fashioned into a canoe. . . .

That Friday evening, we left with the motor-boat, took a northerly course to Halmaheira and, after a somewhat rough night, reached Ternate on the following morning. Beside the pier lay the wreck of the Sultan's yacht, and the Sultan himself, looking as young as I remembered him, lively and jovial, dressed in the uniform of a Dutch colonel, arrived on the scene in a jeep, which he was driving himself. That was certainly something new, and probably only a world war could have produced such emancipation in the space of a few years. Within a very short time we had been accepted as guests for the cruise, the Sultan had inspected the motor-boat sent for his use, and Huizinga and I climbed, baggage and all, into the jeep with His Highness and drove, with a lot of tooting of the horn (to warn the small fry of Ternate who were unaccustomed to motor traffic) to the palace, where the guard sprang to attention.

* * *

The Sultan of Ternate had played a unique role during the war, and I cannot refrain from giving some account of the affair.

On the 7th April, 1942, Japanese soldiers burst into the *kraton* and carried off everything they could lay hands on; it was pure luck that, in their haste, they overlooked the old-fashioned chest containing the family treasures—the helmets of beaten gold and silver, swords, rapiers, candlesticks and goblets, which the princes of Ternate had received as gifts from the East India Company, and before that from the Portuguese and the Spaniards. (This treasure was carried away with all due speed after the Japanese had left the palace and hidden in a safe place somewhere in the interior for the duration of the occupation).

The uninvited visitors drove off in the Sultan's car, and when later that same day the prince was ordered to appear before the Japanese admiral, who was lying at anchor with a fleet of

twenty-eight men-of-war, there was nothing else for him to do but laconically mount a bicycle and pedal off to report to the Japanese marine-officers on the pier, who received him rather haughtily and took him by motor-launch to the admiral's ship. There he was informed that Dai Nippon had already squared accounts with mighty America and poor old England, not to mention Holland, and that he, the Sultan, would do well to submit, without more ado, to Japanese orders.

The Sultan replied that he saw the wisdom of this advice.

For a long time Ternate lay far behind the front line, but the day came when communication with the Allies was restored. As soon as the Americans had established a footing on the neighbouring island of Morotai, informers used all sorts of subterfuges to travel to and fro. The Japanese were misled for a time, but eventually they realised that often at dead of night men from the other islands visited the *kraton* and were given entry to take part in what appeared to be exceedingly suspicious discussions. It was not an easy matter to get more exact details, for the palace guard kept a strict look-out and had no scruples about shooting if anyone who had no business there was found prowling about the premises at night. Of course, it would not have been difficult for the Japanese to arrest the Sultan as an Allied spy. But they knew how much he was beloved of his people, and the prospect of a general revolt of the islanders—at that late stage of the war—was not attractive to the small Japanese force which occupied Ternate; as it was, they were already beginning to feel far from comfortable. Their harsh and cruel behaviour had inflamed the population with hatred for them; the people blamed the conqueror for their material distress and latterly, moreover, great bitterness had been aroused by the carrying off of young girls to the military brothels in Halmaheira.

Meanwhile the Allies were making preparations to liberate Ternate and were anxious to secure the person of the Sultan, who would be of incalculable service to them as an adviser. If he remained in his *kraton*, moreover, there was the danger that the Japanese would use him as a hostage. For all these reasons it was decided to ask him, through a messenger, whether he would be prepared to undertake the dangerous journey to Morotai. After thinking it over, the Sultan agreed to the venture.

The story of this flight has the ring of an Eastern fairy-tale. The Sultan, fearing that the Japanese might take an ignoble revenge, brought with him his two wives and their eight children. Faithful servants carried the immense quantity of luggage. The plan was to cut across country through the mountains to the northern coast of Ternate, and from there to travel by prahu to the neighbouring islet of Hiri; there they would be temporarily under the protection of a Dutch-Australian landing-party while they awaited the arrival of the two motor-torpedo-boats, which were to leave Morotai at an appointed time to pick the party up.

A moonless night had been selected for the flight. On the evening of the 8th October, 1944, the procession, led by a trustworthy guide, set out in silence.

It was a difficult journey, particularly for the Sultana, who was expecting to be a mother again in a few weeks time. The youngest of the children, a tiny tot, soon began to cry from fatigue and had to be carried. In the darkness they stumbled over the roots of trees and lost their footing on the slippery sides of ravines. The road crossed a bed of lava, and they had to crawl laboriously over the lumps of black stone, which tore the skin off their hands. To crown all, rain began to fall. The pregnant woman lost courage and sat down by the roadside; the guide tried to comfort her by telling her the worst was over, they had not much farther to go. She choked back her tears and stood up again. Having set out on this adventure, what else was there to do but go on?

At last the first rays of dawn gleamed through the eerie tree-trunks, and the guide pointed ahead— Look . . . the sea! The road made a rapid descent now. Their first goal was reached.

The dwellers in an adjacent *kampung*, just roused from sleep, were filled with astonishment at this unusual and unexpected visit from the Sultan and his whole family. They came rushing up in excitement, and the women began at once to prepare a meal. They were all poor fisherfolk, but there was no one in the Moluccas so poor that he could not set before his Sultan some rice and a bowl of fresh, cool coconut milk. Men, women and naked children pressed round the travellers, staring round-eyed at the piles of luggage. Could this mean that the Sultan

was leaving Ternate? "*Djooe*, lord, you will stay with us? You will not leave us here alone? What will be our fate if you are no longer here to protect us from the Japanese?"

The Sultan listened to this lament, and then, on that remote shore, he explained to his people that it was not for his own sake that he was having to bid a temporary farewell to Ternate, but so that he might the better be able to help them in their great distress. They must have seen for themselves, he said, that things were going from bad to worse under Japanese rule. The mighty Allies were preparing to drive the tyrant out of Ternate, but how could they do this without the help and advice of a man who knew the country as well as you know the house where you were born and brought up, and, above all, was acquainted with so many military secrets of the Japanese? If at this moment he was staking his life and the lives of his dear ones, it was in order that very soon he might return as a liberator. Until then they must bear their fate courageously.

The men sighed; many of the women wept. But they had understood. The strongest prahus were pushed into the water, and sturdy young fishermen carried the Sultan's family and all the boxes and baskets on their shoulders through the surf. When all was safely on board, they hoisted sail and set out.

At Hiri they were met by the Dutch Captain Krol with a few Australian officers and men and a native guerilla band consisting of about forty Hiri islanders, who had been provided with arms. The two M.T. boats were not due to arrive until noon on the following day, so for more than twenty-four hours they had to depend on their own strength.

Meanwhile the flight had been discovered, and that afternoon a force of Japanese soldiers burst into the *kampung* and ordered the most seaworthy prahus to be got ready immediately to take them across to Hiri. For the moment they refrained from avenging themselves on the population, but the fishermen could read in their faces that more than ever it would be dangerous to trifle with them.

However, Allah himself intervened to shield the Sultan and his family from harm. He stretched out His Hand, and the narrow strait between the two islands became a seething mass of waves, which no Ternate prahu could weather. The Japanese soldiers realised that, unless they were all to be drowned, they

must abandon their plan for this day. They spent the night in the *kampong*, where even the children dared not go to sleep.

It was not until the following morning that the enemy could venture to make the crossing. The sentry on duty on Hiri beach failed to notice their approach, and they were able to land and put a machine-gun in position.

On the little stretch of shore not two hundred yards from the *kampong* where the Sultan and his family had taken shelter, a savage battle took place. At first it seemed as though the Japanese would be the victors. Two Australian officers and the *kampong* chief, leader of the Hiri guerillas, lost their lives.

The Sultan, fearing that the natives would become panic-stricken on the loss of their leader, wanted to take over the command, but while Captain Krol, who was responsible for the Sultan's personal safety, was still doing his utmost to dissuade him, the Hiri fighters were demonstrating their undiminished pugnacity. With loud yells they burst into the terrible, ancient war-cry of the Moluccans, which inspired them with a courage that all the western tactics they had been taught could never give them. Utterly regardless of danger, relying on the sharp blades of their native swords alone, the whole band rushed madly against the machine-gun on the beach, and it was the Japanese who were seized with panic—in the massacre that ensued they were killed and butchered to the last man. Now that they had tasted blood, nothing could restrain these Hiri warriors from settling accounts with the innocent Ternate fishermen, whom the Japanese had forced to man the prahus. They too fell victims to this atavistic orgy of murder. Their gloomy forebodings of the previous morning were cruelly justified. But who could have foreseen that this would be the way in which they would have to give their share towards the liberation of their island?

* * *

An hour after this ruthless battle, a number of Spitfires appeared in the sky, and under their watchful eye no more Japanese could cross the strait. At exactly twelve o'clock the two motor-torpedo-boats arrived and took the royal party on board. Speeding across the water, they reached Morotai before

evening, where His Highness received a joyful welcome and was given a place on the Allied Staff. His wives and children and the rest of his retinue at once took ship for Australia, where in due course the Sultana gave birth to a healthy son. The proud father showed us the boy's photograph, which he carried in his pocket-book.

* * *

This adventurous flight had taken place a good year before we met the prince. He had then been living in his *kraton* again for several months. When we were told in Ternate about the welcome he was given on his return, we wished we could have been present at the festivities, the tale of which was already developing into a sort of legend. The young women of the island, apparently, had taken upon themselves to invade the *kraton* and scrub and polish it from top to bottom, as if by doing so they could wash away all the sad memories. Dancing, singing and music of all kinds was kept up until the Sultan, who had other things to think about, was obliged to bring the rejoicings to an end by sending everyone home. When my friend Huizinga and I came to the *kraton* we found only a few old servants and a Mohammedan religious teacher in a long ceremonial robe, who, on the arrival of his master, silently bowed his turbaned head and put his hands together in respectful greeting.

* * *

The cruise was not due to begin for several days, and we spent this period in one of the few intact houses, which had been put at our disposal. There was not a single piece of furniture in the rooms, but we had taken the precaution to bring with us our own camp-beds and mosquito-nets, and the Sultan's aide-de-camp, a Dutch boy in his early twenties, who at the time of the liberation of Ternate had played the part of a guerilla leader, provided us with a table and two rocking-chairs. He also introduced us to an elderly native woman, whom we knew only by the name of "Auntie", and who made it a point of honour to see that we did not starve in Ternate. Three

times a day she sent us a hot meal in a covered dish, and to this day I cannot imagine what we had to thank for such favours. I can only surmise that she did not want to let the young aide-de-camp down, since in her presence he had assured us that "Auntie" would look after us well.

Oemar, the house-boy we had taken on for a week, could hardly, in these circumstances, be said to be overworked. Every morning he filled our bath reservoir with well water, and gave the floor a bit of a sweep; from nine o'clock he would begin to take things easy. He squatted on the floor and gave himself up to thought. The result of all this meditative staring into space was that, on the very next morning, he demanded some more money on account. The advance we had given him was all spent.

Even the Republic of Indonesia will hardly be able to change things of this kind.

Sitting on our little veranda, between the stems of the coconut palms we could just see the shore, where a little fishing fleet of outrigger-prahus lay baking in the sun. A seventeenth-century bronze cannon standing on the dirty whitewashed walls of the Oranje fortress fixed a sleepy eye on us as we lounged in our rocking-chairs drinking coffee and philosophising. Oemar (I have already mentioned his daily duties) was sweeping the inner room without exerting himself too much; from the mango tree in the front garden came the clear, shrill notes of a song-bird with black and white markings, such as I had never seen in Java. Java, which we had left so recently, seemed infinitely distant—so distant that I found it difficult to call up its picture in my memory.

Together we explored the island, with its shady green lanes, where we could hear the screeching of parakeets and parrots; with its bamboo houses overgrown with flowers; with its bastions, dating back to the days of the East India Company, crumbling under a profusion of weeds, their only purpose now to give harbourage to lizards and snakes. In the evenings we sat in the pavilion built out over the water, where in the good old days the Sultan used to provide Venetian nights for his guests with Chinese lanterns and fireworks and a native orchestra of mandolines and guitars. Now there was silence, a silence so great that we could hear the soft splash of the waves against the stakes on which the pavilion was built. Engrossed

in our talk, we hardly noticed when a bare-footed fisherman approached our part of the shore, and were almost startled by the loud plop of his net when, stretching his arms wide as though in blessing, he let it fall on the water.

On evenings such as this it seemed to us the height of obstinate folly to choose to live in a fatiguing and gloomy place like Europe; we could see no reason why we should not settle down in this paradise and be happy for the rest of our lives. My friend, the young Dutch author, showing signs of a keen business instinct, tried to prove to me what a profitable transaction it would be to buy a haunted house. They were usually cheaper than others, and in the Moluccas, with their cruel history of murder and treason, there must be a wonderful choice of such residences; every old nutmeg-planter's house with its barred windows through which bats flitted in and out, looked as though it must be haunted—a circumstance which for *him*, as an enlightened being, held no terrors. Since it had always been a precarious business to earn a living by writing, he preferred the more secure return from the piece of land, of which he hoped to become the owner with the haunted house, and which, under the tropical sun, he could cultivate by the sweat of someone else's brow. He realised that the life of a landowner had its monotonous side, and decided to bring a little variety into it by making long voyages of discovery through the Moluccas in his capacity of captain of a native sailing ship. He had already thought of a name for it—which was an easier matter to come by than the ship itself, for the Japanese had not left much afloat in the Great East.

But to return to Ternate. One evening the Sultan gave a reception and ball, so we made our way to the *kraton* in the hope of getting to know some of the young beauties of Ternate, of whom we had heard so much. The invitations, however, seemed to have been sent only to the notabilities of the island. Among the guests were the wives of some of our government officials, still waiting to join their husbands in Halmaheira and other islands; apart from them, a number of respectable native ladies, who spoke Dutch with some difficulty. They sat in a group together, exhaling clouds of over-sweet perfume and restlessly waving their fans as they listened to the Moluccan orchestra playing Hawaiian melodies.

We danced, as this was expected of the gentlemen guests, and in the short interval we drank iced beer and a mixture of arrack and fruit-juice, a specialty of Ternate, which was recommended to us under the suggestive name of "*Tikoes Manis*" (Sweet Mouse) and had anything but a cooling effect. And what unlucky star it was I know not that led me to ask my dancing partner, for the sake of something to say, whether a Ternate gentleman who nodded to us was perhaps her husband. With a rather forlorn smile she informed me that I should not meet her husband this evening since, a few months ago, shortly before the arrival of the Allies, the Japanese had beheaded him. Our waltz—or whatever it was—seemed suddenly to have become quite meaningless. Seeing my embarrassment, she pointed out to me with her fan another lady among the guests who had become a widow in the same distressing way.

The cruise itself, on which we were accompanied by the Dutch district officer of the islands we were to visit, was an experience I shall never forget. We passed a whole pageant of volcanoes, rising up sheer out of the sea, their slopes clothed to the very summit with the eternal green of virgin forests; at one moment we could see no less than five at the same time, each one mightier than its neighbour. Dolphins played close up to the bows of our boat; their glistening marbled bodies shot hither and thither through the blue water, and it was sometimes as much as an hour before tiring of this *chassé-croisé*, they swarmed off sideways. A pair of frigate birds followed us patiently the whole way; high above our heads they swayed in symmetrical circles, floating tirelessly on their great pointed wings, keeping a sharp look-out for the curly-headed cook, who emerged now and again from his galley to throw food scraps overboard. Sam the cabin-boy brought us hot black coffee on the foredeck, where we sat in easy chairs under an awning and discussed life in general. Sometimes we fell silent, sleepily watching the sight, which never fails to evoke amazement, of a herring-like fish, which, rising vertically from the waves, flutters a pair of transparent, shimmering gold wings and, using its tail as a propeller, launches itself to glide straight as a dart on a long, skimming flight above the water.

For just under a week we revelled in this *dolce far niente*, visiting half a dozen isles and islets, whose now almost forgotten

names—Tidore, Obi, Makian, Kajoa, Batjan—were common knowledge in the days when cloves were worth their weight in gold. The islanders had been told of the Sultan's intended visit, and the delight and excitement were tremendous as old and young came out to make him welcome.

The reception at Kajoa remains in my memory as particularly festive. Besides the usual solemn deputation of the local priesthood and a number of hadjis (ex-Mecca pilgrims) in long robes, their heads swathed in turbans, we were met here by a group of young men in the colourful warrior's dress of ancient days, carrying their swords and shields. To the music of bamboo flutes a class of school-children marched out of the village; and presently the brightest pupil was to recite a high-sounding speech of welcome, over which first the master (in composing this jewel) and then the pupil himself (in learning it by heart) must have sweated for many long days. Other small boys, who did not attend the school, probably because they didn't own even the most elementary clothing, waded into the surf and swam out to meet us. Through the transparent sea their slender brown bodies appeared to be making strange convulsive movements as, nearing the motor-boat, they trod water and looked up with great, awe-struck eyes at this phenomenon never before seen in their young lives—a real Sultan. White men, too, had been an equally rare sight in Kajoa during the last four years: you had to see them with your own eyes to believe that such beings really existed.

A little group of dancers pressed forward to the front of the pier, old women and young girls, all in festive dresses, specially saved up for such an occasion. The young dancing girls of Kajoa are renowned throughout the Moluccas for their grace and beauty; in Ternate we had already heard them spoken of in enthusiastic terms and we were delighted to have the chance of seeing them. For the time being the girls had no eyes save for their Sultan in his new military splendour. They clapped their hands in admiration when he stepped off the boat.

To the clergy belonged the privilege of being the first to kneel before him and kiss his foot and his hand. After them an old man in rags begged to be allowed to do the same, apologising with tears for not having any better clothes left in which to welcome his lord.

The women and girls did not kneel, but their faces lighted up with an enraptured, rather shy smile. The pride of the school now delivered his flowery address, in which there was frequent mention of the providence of Allah and of the inestimable qualities of the present Sultan and his departed forefathers. The schoolmaster was pale with anxiety while his model pupil rattled off the sentences, gazing desperately into space, as though there, invisible to all others, still floated the text which was imprinted on his retina. With Heaven's help he accomplished the feat, and the crowd of dripping illiterates on the beach gazed at him in speechless admiration of his achievement. For them the treasury of knowledge would never be unlocked; somehow they would have to make their way through life without it.

Then the whole class sang the National Anthem and "*Sehidoep Indonesia*" (Long Live Indonesia), after which we were able to proceed in procession to the village. We had to walk slowly, for ahead of us the young men were performing their war-dance, charging forward and retreating, whirling their swords menacingly above their heads and holding their shields in front of their faces and breasts. Behind us, with dainty-tripping steps, came the girl dancers, twining in and out in the figures of a dance and in high-pitched voices singing verses in which the words "*Selamat datang*" (welcome) constantly recurred. Three or four of the older women beat time on little drums. Following the girls came the priests, the hadjis, the teacher with his class; everyone had his place in the procession, except the naked children, who swarmed around at will, seeming no less happy than the rest. For the whole of Kajoa this was a great and joyous day.

We found the village, like the pier, decorated with palm-leaves, the only material Kajoa possessed for such a purpose. In the covered market chairs had been arranged, and we seated ourselves facing the crowd, who now expected a speech from the Sultan.

He produced smiles of amazement on all faces by saying a few words in the local dialect—so he had not forgotten Kajoa! Then he continued in Malay and made a long and serious speech, introducing texts from the Korân from time to time, to the great satisfaction of the hadjis, who nodded their heads in

thoughtful agreement. He referred to this terrible war, which now, thanks to be Allah, had at last been won, but in its blood-stained tracks it had left many unhealed wounds. For the world which had emerged the outlook was still very gloomy. Nevertheless the worst darkness was now over, and we could begin to think of a brighter future. Kajoa could become a prosperous island again if everyone worked together. Copra, sago, resin and other products would bring a good return again; things were no longer as they had been under the occupation, when the Japanese came and carried off the goods, paying for them with worthless bits of paper, which would purchase nothing. The sea was free again for fishing; all that had to be done was to build new prahus; the material was not far to seek.

And, apart from all this, he said, he saw a higher task for Kajoa. Kajoa could set an example to the whole world. Wars arose from jealousy among the nations, from avarice and pride, from mutual intolerance; men killed each other sometimes because they belonged to different races, spoke different languages. But was that reasonable?

"Listen, my friends, I am going to tell you something. Here in Kajoa we all know each other; our daughters marry the sons of our neighbours; our sons their daughters; we are all one big family. Thus, we know too that we can trust each other, for if anyone did wrong the whole island would hear of it at once, and the guilty man would not know where to go. But just because we all know and trust one another, we are very quickly inclined to feel mistrust of a man from another island, since we do not know him. If you think about it, your reason must tell you that this is very foolish. It would be pride—and pride, the Korân tells us, is a dangerous sin—it would be pride to imagine that only in Kajoa are there any good men. So I am going to give you some good advice. If we are visited here in Kajoa by a merchant from Batjan or Makian or Motir or anywhere else, or by a fisherman who comes to take shelter from a storm—receive him as though he too were a kinsman of your blood. Nothing bears richer fruit than a good deed—you can read many examples of that, too, in the Korân. If you treat this man from Makian or Tidore or Obi as a brother, then your action will be spoken of in the remotest islands, and you, as a man of Kajoa, will enjoy the same kindness when it is *your* turn to go on a journey or,

in a rising West-monsoon storm, to seek shelter on an unknown shore. Mutual trust and mutual tolerance are the pillars of democracy.

"That is a new and difficult word which I have just pronounced. Democracy! Many of you probably have heard it to-day for the first time. In future, however, you will often hear of it, for we are living in the era of democracy. But, you will be asking me, what is this democracy. Don't expect me to explain it to you all at once, for it is more than you would be able to grasp the first time; but every time I visit you (and I hope to be visiting you regularly again now) I will speak of it and gradually the word will have a meaning for you. One of the things it implies is that every one of you, even the poorest and least well educated, has the right to speak frankly to me, your Sultan, and to tell me of the troubles which keep you awake at night. That is why I have come to you to-day—to learn what are your needs. Do not be ashamed to tell me of your poverty, for I know you have lost almost everything. Do not imagine either that you in Kajoa are the only ones. It is the same in Ternate, in Halmaheira, in Amboyna, and in Java, yes, throughout the whole world; we have all become poor because of this war.—Well, now let me see which of you has the most courage. . . . I am listening."

There was silence. The men looked at one another, hesitating and rather embarrassed, still shy of this new word, so difficult to remember, of which the Sultan had spoken.

The schoolteacher was the first to venture to raise his hand. In solemn phrases he began by stating that he fully realised his own insignificance and his inability to express himself. But since the Sultan had exhorted everyone to speak freely of what overburdened his heart, he felt it to be his duty to say that the people of Kajoa had not yet a full realisation of the importance of learning. There he was in his school-house, ready to share his modest knowledge with the youth of Kajoa—and only a handful of far-seeing parents thought it worth while to make a small financial sacrifice and send their children to him. This was his main complaint. But since he had had the audacity to ask for a hearing . . . could the Sultan hold out any hopes of his being able to get the most essential equipment for his school? He did his best, but it was difficult to teach children

to read, to write and to count, if you had nothing but a few tattered reading books at your disposal, and practically no slates or paper, pencils, pens or ink. . . .

The Sultan thanked him for his clear, straightforward words. He would see if the Japanese had left any suitable paper and writing materials behind in Ternate. Meanwhile he feared that for some time yet the school would have to go short in the matter of books and other equipment. But the request should be put forward immediately. As for the first point—he could scarcely imagine that there were still in Kajoa parents (that is to say, intelligent and affectionate parents) who did not realise the importance of schooling. Surely no one could be so stupid as to wish that his children, too, should grow up stupid and ignorant, so that later on people would ask them in amazement: “Whoever were your father and mother that they didn’t send you to school?” . . . Now, who next? Surely Kajoa can boast of more than one man with the courage to stand up and speak his mind?

Again embarrassed silence. The teacher was satisfied and wiped the sweat from his brow; he felt something had been accomplished.

It needed only one look at the crowd to see that Kajoa was deficient in many other things besides lesson-books and respect for learning. We saw children with preposterously swollen bellies balanced on rickety spindle legs, while even their unkempt, old-looking heads seemed too big for their undernourished bodies. Some of the adults kept themselves shyly in the background, not only because of their rags, but to hide loathsome tropical sores. Starvation, beri-beri, malaria, framboesia, dysentery, had left their terrible traces throughout the Moluccas, and the island paradise of Kajoa had not escaped.

A young peasant cleared his throat. He asked pardon for his audacity in opening his unworthy mouth; he had no fine and learned words at his disposal like the schoolmaster, and so he would be brief. All he wanted to say was that the wild boars came night after night and destroyed his field, so that his trouble and work went for nothing. He had done everything he could to drive off this scum that respected neither God nor man, but as he had to work by day he couldn’t keep awake at

night, and no matter how strong a hedge he made, the marauders broke through it.

The Sultan nodded. This was a grievance that could be dealt with. He would send some soldiers with carbines, good shots, who would put an end to this plague, about which there were complaints from all the islands, and the peasants of Kajoa would be able to reap the fruits of their labours as in the past.

"Come, anything more? School books and wild boars, is that all?" asked the Sultan on a rather more impatient note and with a touch of raillery, which he hoped might shake the people out of their stupid timidity. And suddenly the storm broke loose. Now they all tried to talk at once; even the women and the very poorest pressed forward.—Sultan, help us! Lots of us have no clothes left to put on; some have stayed at home to-day because they were ashamed to show themselves. The maize and tapioca we can raise here aren't enough to feed us, and it's a year or more since the last prahu came with rice. There have never been so many sick as there are now, and we have no medicines and no doctor. Allah, why do we have to suffer so much misery? Won't you send us a doctor and medicines, Sultan? You alone can save us!

The Sultan, calm in the midst of the sudden uproar, smiled. At last he had heard the truth.

"Good. Now we understand one another. I will try to send you a doctor, but when that will be I cannot yet say, for doctors are needed everywhere, everywhere. Meanwhile, however, I have an idea. When I leave here to-morrow, I will take a few of your keenest young men and girls with me, so that they can be taught in Ternate how to treat the diseases so many of you are suffering from. Within two or three months I will send them back to you, and they shall bring all the medicines I can spare. We have not much now, but we hope to get more. . . . The same applies to food and clothing. As I have told you already, the whole world has been at war, not only Kajoa and the islands, you know. Instead of clothes the factories have had to make guns and aircraft; fields that might have produced food have been laid waste. There is a great shortage of ships. All over the world, in Europe, too, there are people who are starving and have no clothes to cover themselves with, and over there it is even worse than here, for there they suffer from the cold. You

do not know what it is to be cold and therefore never think about it, but I have been in Europe, and you may believe me, my friends, to be cold is worse than hunger and sickness together."

Already the people were half satisfied. The Sultan now knew of their troubles. They had to have a little patience still, but he would not forget Kajoa, and they could be sure the day would come when he would bring them relief. Was it conceivable that anything in the world was beyond his power? The Hadjis told them that, although he was still comparatively young, he had mastered all the wisdom of the Korân, and how impressive and handsome he looked in his uniform! Oh, it was good to have him there again after these long and dark years. We have told him all our misery—let us think no more about it. This evening we will make merry and celebrate the day on which our Sultan came among us as our guest again. People used to say that of all the islands Kajoa was nearest to his heart; our girls must see that it remains so. Let us have music and dancing and happiness as we used to have in the good old days!

But first there were more serious matters to attend to. After the people had dispersed to await the festivities of the evening, the Sultan called a meeting of the priests and village chiefs. He questioned them on all sorts of things, economic and social; then they talked of Indonesia in general and of conditions in Java, so Huizinga and I thought it was time for us to take a walk in the village. The Dutch district officer stayed behind. He had known all these chiefs in the past, and they welcomed him as an old friend.

Later that day he conducted the judicial proceedings against a Kajoa war criminal—a *kampung* chief who had obeyed rather too submissively a demand made by the Japanese to be supplied with a number of girls for the military brothels in Halmaheira.

It happened like this. As soon as the population got wind of the Japanese demand, they set to work arranging marriages at random—knowing that married women were immune from the danger of abduction. Young fishermen, out at sea in their prahus, learned on their return home that they were betrothed to girls they would never have chosen themselves; they were assured, at the same time, that, of course, no difficulties would be placed in the way of a divorce later on. For some of the

girls, however, it was not so easy to find a husband, or else they hoped perhaps that even without such a marriage ceremony they might manage to slip through the meshes of the net. Their own *kampung* chief would certainly not betray them to the enemy.

But another chief (the present defendant) knew of this, and when the Japanese came to him one day and told him that he must that very evening collect half a dozen girls for immediate shipment, in his terror he went over to the nearby *kampung* accompanied by two soldiers of the Mikado and picked out these girls. It was said afterwards that he had been driven by reasons of personal revenge.

Now, however, four of these girls had returned to Kajoa (two of them had not survived the journey and all else it entailed), and on the afternoon of the enquiry they gave him a very bad half-hour. One in particular turned on him like a fury. In her unbounded hatred of the author of her misfortune, she hardly allowed the three other victims to get a word in edgeways; she knew all that had befallen them and had a better command of language. If a question was addressed to them, she immediately intervened with blazing passion, and no jocular remark about the way she was behaving, not even serious reproofs from the priest who was present, had the slightest effect on her. While her statement was being translated into Malay for the district officer, she continued her diatribes against the accused in the Kajoa dialect. So successfully did she dominate the proceedings that the wretched *kampung* chief hardly noticed when a question was put to him; wiping the sweat from his grey face at intervals, he merely stared at this embodiment of retribution here before his very eyes.

Nuremberg in the Moluccas.



Shortly after dark the revels began. With complete disregard for the seriousness of the discussions between the Sultan and the old men, the girl dancers (who had been waiting at a short distance all the time) began to sing and beat their fingers on their little drums, never ceasing until their guest of honour rose and followed them to the school, where the band had already

begun to play. On this occasion there was no one in Kajoa who did not know the way to the little building where by day the fount of knowledge flowed. Chairs had been placed ready, and we were asked to take our seats to watch the dances of welcome. A good deal more primitive than the Javanese dances, they had the charm of naturalness and simplicity, and after a while the perpetual repetition of the figures began to cast a strange spell over all of us.

Then suddenly the girls came forward one by one and threw a silk handkerchief at our feet, which we could consider as an invitation to take part in the dance. Huizinga and I both did our best, and fortunately there was no one to see us save the people of Kajoa, who that evening were in the mood to forgive much. The Sultan danced gracefully, and we could see that it was nothing new to the district officer. Under such circumstances the party could only be a success, and the many for whom there was no room in the building began to clamour to share in the fun. It was not difficult to grant this request. All one had to do was to remove the walls of plaited bamboo from between the posts which supported the roof. It was no longer necessary now for anyone to twist his neck trying to peep through a window, and the atmosphere became much less stuffy.

We kept it up until after midnight; then we retired as unobtrusively as possible, without fear that our absence would diminish the revelling, which by now had reached its peak. At the house of the village chief I found the mosquito curtains round my bed hospitably opened, and a faint, sweet scent greeted me. On the following morning I was to discover that a considerate hand had strewn the sheet with dried flower petals.

But while we lay down and slept, Kajoa danced on. And when I awoke about an hour before sunrise I could still hear through the crowing of the cocks the music of the band. It came nearer; there was singing as well. Led by the flute-players they streamed past the house, children drunk with sleep clinging to their mothers' hands.

Shortly afterwards I heard whispering and suppressed giggles on the little veranda, and I recognised the voices of the young dancers. Suddenly they burst into song again; this time a morn-

ing salutation to the words "*Selamat bangoen*" (may your awakening be blessed). I went out to tell the girls that the Sultan was still peacefully sleeping, but this news did not deter them; on the contrary. Pushing each other forward like unruly school-children, they came in and peeped through the open door at their lord, who was just waking up from his night's rest, looking, like any other mortal, rather helpless and dishevelled.

Wake up, Sultan; the sun is rising, and here we are to sing to you. Are you an old man already, that you should want to sleep when the dancing girls of Kajoa come to visit you? . . . He sighed, stood up and drove the whole merry band back to the veranda. There the girls waited until he had refreshed himself in the bamboo bathing-hut behind the house and was ready for his breakfast. While he was drinking hot black coffee and eating a poached egg, they sat on the floor and on the low walls of the veranda and sang improvised ditties with teasing and naïvely amorous words. When they succeeded in making him laugh, or if he gave them an apt retort, they clapped their hands with delight like children. How wonderful to see the Sultan happy and content!

When we went on board again, they formed an escort of honour as far as the pier. There again we found the chiefs, the priests, the hadjis, the teacher and his class—the whole population of Kajoa. The naked brown water-rats swam with us until the boat made speed and we left them behind. Then, displaying all their white teeth in a wide grin, they thrust glistening wet arms out of the water and sent a loud, joyful shout resounding through the sunny morning. From the pier girls' hands waved to us, and coloured dancing scarves fluttered in the breeze.

So much for Kajoa and democracy in the Moluccas.



A few days before Christmas I was standing again on the air-field in Batavia. It took me some time to readjust myself to this world of bloodshed and madness.

At "Public Relations" I found new colleagues from all parts of the world; others, Ian Morrison, for instance, and Richard Sharp, were thinking of leaving; they had probably seen as

much as they wanted for the time being. It looked as though the discussions between the two parties had reached a deadlock and were likely to remain at a standstill for a long time to come.

The women's camps, now developing into family camps, were as full and noisy and evil-smelling as ever. At the entrances young girls stood waiting for cars to come and pick them up; children in dungarees played in the muddy puddles—for in the meantime the rains had broken. In the Tjideng camp a loud-speaker had been installed, and in the evenings the women sat in the open air listening to Beethoven and Mozart—a pleasure they had been denied for years and to which their hungry spirits responded eagerly; even the mosquitoes, swarming in thousands in the gardens and the gutters, were almost forgotten.

Along Trivelli Lane (which leads to Tjideng) armed Dutch ex-prisoners patrolled every evening to prevent women being molested on their way home and to secure the residential district around the camp against pillagers.

In Tandjoeng Priok (the harbour of Batavia) a shipload of Dutch soldiers had arrived from America, where they had been in training. For some mysterious reason the voyage had taken about twice the normal time, but now there was great excitement and merry-making on board: Java was in sight at last, and it seemed unthinkable that they would not be allowed to land. A couple of hundred (about a third of them, I should think) were actually disembarked; I saw them driving through Batavia in lorries, waving and singing, delighted to have bidden farewell to the hot, confined space in which they had been crowded together for so long, unaware as yet of what awaited them in this country.

The rest of them were sent back to Singapore by Allied Command.

In the Old Town conditions were much the same, except that in the *Factorij* building I found another company of Seaforth Highlanders. All these boys were longing to get back to Bonnie Scotland; they told me frankly that they had had more than enough of Indonesia and its inhabitants, both white and brown.

I saw Sjahrir, who looked weary. Dr. van Mook, too, was sorely overworked. When had he ever been anything else? But now everyone seemed to be at the end of his tether.

A Dutch woman, not long returned from the Ambarawa

camp near Semarang, told me that the *pemoedas* had broken into the camp with the intention of massacring the women and children. The shooting was just about to begin, when the Gurkhas came to the rescue. I had already heard at Public Relations that the nationalists had subjected the camp to artillery fire and that there had been casualties.

In Batavia the evacuation to Holland had begun on a rather more extensive scale. War widows and the sick were going first. But, after all, who was there who could *not* be considered as qualifying for sick leave?

There were gallant women, who wanted to stay, particularly now. "It looks too much like running away from danger and difficulties. We have known the Indies in the good days when life was easy for us; there is difficult, up-hill pioneer work to be done now, and we want to remain at our posts. We should be ashamed to come back here later on to profit by what others have accomplished while *we* made an escape. Soon we shall be able to go up to the hills in Java, and we can regain our health there just as well as in Europe. One day all this stupid hatred and murder must come to an end, and then the hotels and sanatoria in the hills will be open again. . . ."



Christmas in the tropics at the best of times had something unreal about it. What is there to put one in the mood for it? Now, in addition, we were living in an occupied town, and the watchwords for any sort of pleasure were whisky and jazz.

Richard Sharp, probably feeling a little home-sick for England, made an heroic attempt to kindle the true Christmas spirit, at any rate in his own room. Even if there was no snow; even if there was no pealing of Christmas bells on a dark winter's night, at least something could be done about a tree. Actually he succeeded in conjuring up what, at a distance, looked like the real thing; he lighted the candles and awaited his guests—he had invited all his colleagues. And we all turned up faithfully, bringing our little contributions to this communal festivity—cigarettes, drink, tinned chocolate. But he very soon had to put out the candles because the heat became intolerable.

Some bright spirits in the corridor had managed to get hold

of a stuffed iguana, and had attached it for fun to the door-knob of a woman correspondent's room.—They knock at her door and quickly hide themselves. The unsuspecting occupant says "Come in"; getting no response, she goes out to see who is there, and as she opens the door she pulls the huge green lizard towards her. A shriek that re-echoes through the whole building and the practical jokers have to go and comfort their victim, who is in danger of going into hysterics.

A young officer has a still better idea. He empties his revolver in the corridor; every bullet ricochets with a clear, metallic ring on the tiled floor. Before leaving the room, one opens the door cautiously and peeps out. Outside groups of newly-arrived parachutists are trooping by—lanky youths, who have learnt to regard the whole world as a battle-field. Some of them fire their carbines into the air, shouting: "Where are them bloody Indonesians?" A red glow over the south-east of the town provides the answer to this challenge; *pemoedas* or perhaps bandits are lighting a bonfire in a house they have been pillaging.

In the afternoon I had seen Scottish soldiers driving round one of the camps in lorries to collect the children for a Christmas party, where army chocolate was distributed and even toys, bought in the atom market. Now, with evening, there were balls in the hotels for the grown-ups.

There has been a lot of censure of the gaiety in Batavia during this tragic time. But was it so surprising that the sudden freedom should temporarily go to the heads of many young women? When I had visited the camps in September, these women seemed to have lost all their feminine instincts; they apparently did not care what they looked like. But the first decent frock they were able to buy aroused the woman in them. And as they regained their health they felt the spring of youth in their blood again.

And the wonderful experiences! To glide through the sultry tropical evening in a car once again; to feel the wind playing in your hair after being crowded together for four years behind barbed wire with hubbub and the stink of drains all around you. To sit at a properly laid table again and eat off a plate with a knife and fork, instead of sitting on an upturned box and spooning your food out of a tin. After being humiliated

for so long that you have come to look upon yourself as a pariah, to have hotel-boys waiting on you. The music of the band and a slow waltz. *Can I still dance?* The excitement of your first conversation with a man. A man who is consumed with longing for his homeland and within five minutes is laying bare his heart to you. And what of the longing in the hearts of these women?

There were some who would not have gone to dances before the return of their husbands, if, in the same house, there had not been two other women, also married, who did it and came back with amazing accounts of their conquests. Did they imagine they were the only attractive women? Why shouldn't I get a cavalier too? And, after all, what harm is there in it? Can't I look after myself? I should like, just once, to find out whether I can still be young. . . .

It was a fever, and not every woman could withstand the contagion.

* * *

It must have been getting on for two o'clock when I stood on the balcony of my room and took one more look at the sleeping town. The red glow in the south-east had died down. The big frogs in the little pond in front of the Hotel des Indes kept up a melancholy croaking through the silence of the night. The Scottish sentry marched up and down in solitude on the other side of the Molenvliet, taking a few rapid steps each time he turned in the prescribed manner. His comrades were sleeping beneath mosquito-nets in the open vestibule of the hotel.

Now and again a car drove by with fiery eyes, carrying some lady home; the sentry stopped the vehicle and looked inside. On this Christmas night the curfew was not taken so seriously as usual. In any case officers were exempt, and there was always an acceptable excuse to be found for a lady's late home-coming.

The air was particularly oppressive that night; very soon the rain would probably come pouring down, for hours on end, deadening the senses and making even thought impossible. It was close in the room, and I stretched myself out in a cane chair on the balcony.

My thoughts, straying aimlessly, wandered to the interior of

Java, which this time was to remain closed to me. How much I would have liked to see Djocja and Solo again. The dances of the lovely *serimpihs* at the princes' courts, the colourful theatre performances, with which the late Mangkoe Negoro VII used to entertain his guests. The dreamy music of the *gamelan*, the native orchestra, re-echoing through the open marble rooms of the *Kraton*.

The *pemoedas* were the masters there now, and Hamangkoe Boewono of Djocjakarta, a polished prince with an almost western outlook, had had to come from his palace to meet Soekarno at the station and declare his devotion to the Republic. What had he to hope for from the Republic? Was he not, like the Sultan of Ternate, a survival of the medieval nobility who, in the words of Sjahrir, were being used as instruments by the Dutch for the oppression of the people? Indeed, were not these representatives of the old autocracy the very foremost enemies of awakening Indonesia?

I thought of the gallant little premier with his tired smile. In my mind and in the minds of many others who believed in his tenacity, there was no doubt of his ultimate victory over his undeclared enemy, Soekarno. But how long was it to be before he succeeded in rooting out from the Indonesian Republican ranks the fascism that he had dared to challenge? And when presently that shining goal was reached and the independence of Indonesia was recognised by the whole world, would perhaps then the greatest disillusionment of his life be awaiting him? The patient, hard-working Indonesian peasant might be relied on, but what of the whole nation—would it have the strength of purpose to develop into a self-contained, integrate, respected state? After the first flush of victory would the people be able to produce enough energetic men with a proper sense of responsibility to infuse the new state with vitality? Only the future could show. Should Holland prove to have been wrong in her widespread pessimism in this respect; should the Indonesian nation, in spite of expectations to the contrary, prove its ability to govern itself in a modern world without any period of apprenticeship—then, historically speaking, all the human suffering of to-day would sink into unimportance in the face of so great a revelation.

It was nearly morning by now. The rain still held off and the sky began to grow lighter. Flying-foxes were returning from a nocturnal expedition; apparently there was an orchard somewhere in the west which they had been to plunder. They flew over in hundreds, their great bat's wings silhouetted against the low-hanging clouds as they flapped slowly up and down. Meanwhile Jock, the caged gibbon of the Hotel des Indes, greeted the break of day with a piercing, impertinent screech.

Along the Molenvliet Canal the first group of fruit-vendors approached from the direction of the Old Town. Swinging one arm rhythmically the better to balance their heavy load, they seemed to be performing some mysterious dance as they passed beneath my balcony, noiselessly on their unshod feet. The only sounds that rose to my ears were their rapid panting breath and the creaking of the bamboo yoke on their naked shoulders.

